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Edition de Luxe

Captain Fracasse

Part III.

My Private Menagerie

Paris Besieged

By

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Translated and Edited by

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DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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EDITION DE LUXE

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Captain Fracasse

XV

MALARTIC AT WORK

GREAT as had been the Duke's anger when he returned to his residence, it was no greater than the Baron's when he learned of Vallombreuse's intrusion upon Isabella, and it took all the persuasive powers of the Tyrant and Blazius to keep him from hastening to the Duke's mansion and challenging him to a duel; which his lordship would assuredly have refused, since Sigognac, being neither the brother, the husband, nor the declared lover of the actress, had no right to call for an explanation of an act that, besides, was quite self-explanatory. In France, men have always enjoyed the right to make love to pretty women. Undoubtedly the setting the ruffian to attack Sigognac on the Pont-

Neuf did not come under the head of fair play, but though it was probable that the Duke had ordered it, it was no easy matter to trace the devious connection between the rascal and the great nobleman. Even had it been possible to do so, the difficulty of proving it would still have stood in the way; and besides, there was no one to whom Sigognac could appeal to have such cowardly attempts punished. In the eyes of the world, Sigognac, who concealed his real rank, was no more than a low play-actor, a mummer of mean estate, whom a nobleman like Vallombreuse was perfectly entitled to have thrashed, thrown into prison, or slain, as he preferred, without any one making the least objection, merely on the ground that he was annoyed or interfered with by him. Isabella's virtuous resistance would have been ascribed to an affectation of prudery, for the virtue of actresses met with more incredulous Thomases and sceptical Pyrrhos than believers. So it was hopeless to hold the Duke responsible, much to Sigognac's disgust, compelled as he was to acknowledge the force of the arguments urged by Herod and the Pedant, who insisted that it was best to lie low and keep quiet, while keeping a bright look-out; for it was certain that his lordship, handsome as an angel and

wicked as the devil, would not abandon his purpose, even though it had so far failed in every respect. But it was Isabella's pleading glance, as she clasped Sigognac's trembling hands in her own fair ones, that finally calmed the angry Baron, whom she besought to restrain himself for her sake; and matters then resumed their normal course.

The first performances of the company had proved signally successful: Isabella's modest grace, Zerbina's brilliancy and spirit, Serafina's coquettish elegance, the superb extravagance in which Captain Fracasse indulged, the Tyrant's majestic pomposity, Leander's white teeth and rosy lips, the grotesque good-nature of the Pedant, Scappino's subtle cleverness, and the Duenna's comic skill, proved as effective in Paris as in the provinces. All they now lacked, having obtained the approbation of the city, was the approbation of the Court, which contained the people of the best taste and the most expert connoisseurs. It was indeed proposed to summon them to Saint-Germain, — the King, hearing of their performances, having expressed the wish to witness their acting, greatly to the delight of Herod, who was at once manager and treasurer of the company. They were frequently engaged by people

of quality, who had them perform in their mansions when they wished to entertain ladies desirous of seeing actors whose reputation already equalled that of the companies of the Hôtel de Bourgogne and the Marais.

Herod therefore was not surprised, now that he was used to such invitations, at being called upon one fine morning, in the inn of the Rue Dauphine, by a sort of steward or majordomo, of venerable appearance, like all people of that class who have grown old in the service of a noble family, and who expressed the wish to speak to him, on behalf of his master, the Count de Pommereuil, on business connected with his profession.

The majordomo was dressed in black velvet from head to foot; he wore a chain of gold ducats round his neck, silk stockings, and shoes with large bows; the shoes square-toed, and somewhat easy to the foot, as would be the case with an old man apt to suffer from gout. A lace cravat fell white upon his doublet, and set off his complexion, tanned by the open air of the country, and on his face his white eyebrows, mustache, and chin tuft showed like touches of snow upon an antique bust. His long white hair fell down to his shoulders and imparted to him a most patriarchal and trustworthy

appearance. He was plainly one of those stewards, who have left no successors, who care for their masters' interests more keenly than for their own, who remonstrate against needless expenditure, and in times of distress use their own poor savings to help the family whose bread they have eaten in the days of prosperity.

Herod could not sufficiently admire the handsome face and honest looks of the majordomo, who, having bowed to him, said in courteous language: —

"You are, I believe, the Master Herod who manages, with a hand as firm as Apollo's, ruling the company of the Muses, the excellent troupe the renown of which fills the city and has even now gone beyond it, for it has reached the estate on which my master resides."

"I have that honour," answered Herod, with as gracious a bow as he could manage with his grim and tragic face.

"The Count de Pommereuil," went on the old fellow, "is anxious to entertain some guests of his by having a play performed in his château, and it occurred to him that your company would best answer his purpose. He has therefore ordered me to ascertain whether you could manage to give one performance at

his place, which is only a few miles distant. His lordship is a generous master who does not mind expense, and is willing to pay you your own price in order to secure the services of your illustrious troupe."

"I shall do my utmost to satisfy so generous a gentleman," answered the Tyrant, "although it is not an easy matter for us to leave Paris, even for a few days, when we are meeting with such success here."

"Three days will be ample," returned the majordomo. "One to go, one for the performance, and one for the return journey. We have a stage already prepared, so that you will merely have to set up your scenery. Further, here are a hundred pistoles which the Count de Pommereuil has commissioned me to hand to you for the purpose of defraying incidental expenses. A similar sum will be paid you after the performance, and the ladies are sure to be presented with a ring, a pin, or a bracelet, women being fond of such souvenirs."

As he spoke the Count de Pommereuil's majordomo drew from his pocket a long and heavy purse, chock-full of money, inclined it, and poured out on the table one hundred handsome new crowns most attractive in their brightness.

The Tyrant gazed with an air of deep satisfaction upon the coins heaped up one upon another, and stroked his long black beard. When he had looked his fill he picked them up, ranged them in piles, and then dropped them into his pocket with a gesture of assent.

"I understand that you accept," said the majordomo, "and I may inform my master that you will come."

"My comrades and I are at his lordship's disposal," answered Herod. "And now let us settle the day upon which the performance is to take place; and let me know which play his lordship prefers, so that we may take with us the necessary costumes and scenery."

"You had better come on Thursday," replied the majordomo, "for my master is very eager to have the entertainment come off. As for the play, he leaves the selection of it to your own good taste."

"'The Comic Illusion,' by a young and promising Norman author," said Herod, "is the newest thing out at present and the success of the day."

"'The Comic Illusion' be it. The verse is not bad, and there is a splendid part of a swaggering Hector in it."

"Then all that is necessary now is for you to tell me, quite fully, so that we shall not run the risk of losing our way, the locality of his lordship's residence, and the readiest way of reaching it."

The Count de Pommereuil's steward explained the locality and the road to it with such wealth of accurate detail that a blind man could not have failed to reach the place; then, fearing, no doubt, that once the company had started the manager might forget all the directions to "go straight on, then turn to your right, then the first turn on the left," he added: —

"Do not trouble to remember all that, for your mind must be sufficiently burdened with the lines of our great poets. I shall send a lackey to show you the way."

The business having been thus settled, the old gentleman withdrew with many a bow, that Herod returned, and which he acknowledged by new bows, lower than the preceding one, so that as they bobbed up and down in front of each other they looked like two brackets suffering from Saint Vitus's dance. Determined not to be outdone in civility, the Tyrant accompanied his visitor down the stairs and across the court-yard, stopping only at the outer gate, from which

he addressed to the old fellow a final bow, his back bent, his chest drawn in as far as his paunch would allow, his arms limp, and his forehead almost touching the ground.

If Herod had followed with his eyes the Count de Pommereuil's majordomo to the corner of the street, he might have noticed that, contrary to the laws of perspective, the old fellow grew taller in direct ratio to the distance he traversed. His bent back straightened out; the senile trembling of his hands vanished, and his lively gait proved he was by no means gouty. But Herod saw nothing of all this, for he had already re-entered the inn.

On the Wednesday morning, while the inn servants were engaged in loading the scenery and boxes of costumes upon a wain drawn by two stout horses, hired by the Tyrant for the conveyance of the company, a tall rascal of a lackey in a very handsome livery, riding on a Percheron horse and cracking his whip, turned up at the inn door, in order to hurry the actors and to act as their guide. The ladies, who, like all women, were fond of lying abed and spending an unconscionable time in dressing, — even when they are actresses, accustomed to dress and undress in a twinkling, on

account of the changes of costume required on the stage, — at last came down and settled themselves as comfortably as they could on the boards, covered with bundles of straw, that had been fitted to the sides of the van. The small figure on the Samaritaine was hammering out the hour of eight upon its gong when the heavy vehicle pulled out of the court-yard of the inn. In less than half an hour it had passed out of the Saint-Antoine gate and beyond the Bastile, the towers of which were reflected in the dark waters of the moat. The suburb, with its cultivated open spaces and its small houses was traversed, and the vehicle proceeded through the countryside in the direction of Vincennes; the donjon rising in the distance in a vaporous, bluish haze, the remains of the night mists that the sun was dispelling as the wind dispels the smoke of guns.

The horses being fresh and travelling at a good pace, the company of actors soon reached the old citadel, its Gothic defences preserving an air of strength, although they were unfitted to resist cannons and mortars. The gilded crescents topping the minarets of the chapel built by Pierre de Montereau, flashed brightly above the ramparts as though they took pride in finding themselves alongside the cross, the symbol

of the Redemption. Having spent a few moments in admiring the monument of the former glory of the French kings, the van entered the wood, in which, amid thickets and young trees rose majestically a number of old oaks, no doubt contemporaries of the famous tree under which Saint Louis administered justice, an occupation eminently befitting a monarch.

The road not being much travelled, every now and then the van, which rolled noiselessly along over the soft ground, often covered with grass, startled rabbits engaged in their morning gambols and stroking their noses with their paws. The little fellows would take to their heels as if a pack of dogs were after them, to the great entertainment of the players. Or else a roe deer sprang terrified across the road, and they could follow it for a time in its flight among the leafless trees. Sigognac, born and bred in the country, took especial pleasure in these happenings. It delighted him to see once more fields, bushes, woods, and wild animals, sights he had not beheld since he had taken to living in the city, where one sees naught but houses, muddy streets, smoking chimneys, and other works of man, and not of God. He would have been terribly weary of that life, had he not enjoyed the company of the

sweet girl, whose eyes were blue enough to make up for the loss of the heavens.

On issuing from the wood they came to a short rise. Sigognac said to Isabella: —

"Would you not like, dear one, while the van is slowly climbing this hill, to get down and take my arm for a short walk? It will warm you and take the stiffness out of your limbs. The road is smooth, and it is a lovely winter's day, sharp and bracing, but not too cold."

The young actress accepted Sigognac's invitation, rested the tips of her fingers upon his proffered hand, and sprang lightly to the ground. It was an opportunity of granting her lover a quiet talk by themselves, which her modesty would have led her to avoid in the privacy of a closed room. They walked on, at times borne along by their love and as if treading on air, at times stopping to gaze upon each other and to enjoy the delight of being together, side by side, arm in arm, their eyes fixed upon each other. Sigognac repeated to the young girl that he adored her, and though she had heard it a score of times, it seemed ever new to her as no doubt was to Adam his first attempt at speech on the morrow of the Creation. As, in matters of senti-

ment, she was most refined and disinterested, she endeavoured by teasing and by caressing refusals to restrain within the limits of friendship the passion she had resolved not to reward, convinced as she was that this would not be advantageous to the Baron's future. But the loving discussions and disputes merely increased Sigognac's devotion, and just then he had as completely forgotten the haughty Yolande as though she had never existed.

"Do what you may, sweetheart," he said to his beloved, "you will never tire out my constancy; and if needs must, I shall wait until your scruples have vanished of themselves, even if it be until your lovely golden hair has turned to silver."

"Oh!" cried Isabella, "then shall I indeed be a remedy for love fit to appal the most passionate, and I should fear to punish you for your fidelity were I to reward it."

"Even when you shall have reached the age of three-score," gallantly returned Sigognac, "your charms will be untouched, like those of the lady sung by Maynard; for your beauty springs from the soul, and that is immortal."

"All the same," retorted the young girl, "you would

be dreadfully disappointed if I were to take you at your word and promised to wed you even ere I reached the three-score, say at fifty. But," she went on, resuming her serious manner, "a truce to all this nonsense. You know that my mind is made up, and you ought to be satisfied with being loved better than man ever was since hearts first began to beat upon earth."

"I own that so sweet an avowal ought to satisfy me, but my love being infinite, it brooks no limit. God may say to the ocean, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther,' and the ocean will obey; but a love such as mine knows no bounds, and grows ever greater, even though your celestial voice bids it stay its course."

"Sigognac, you will make me angry if you go on," said Isabella, with a pout more witching than the loveliest smile; for, in spite of herself, her soul was filled with joy as she listened to the outpouring of a love that no coldness could dismay.

They walked on in silence for a time, Sigognac fearing, did he say more, to displease her whom he loved more than his own life. Suddenly Isabella let go his arm and ran, light as a doe, and with a quick cry of gladness, to the roadside. She had caught sight, on the other side of the ditch, under an oak tree and half

concealed by the fallen leaves, of a violet, the first one of the season unquestionably, for the month was February. She knelt down, gently brushed away the leaves and the blades of grass, plucked the flower, and came back with it happier than if she had found in the moss a diamond brooch mislaid by a princess.

"See how pretty it is," said she to Sigognac; "its petals have barely opened to the first rays of the sun."

"It is your glance and not the sun that has made it bloom," answered he, "for it is exactly the colour of your eyes."

"It does not give out much scent," went on Isabella, as she placed the chilly bloom in her bosom, "because it is cold."

A few minutes later she drew it forth, breathed in its scent, and handed it to Sigognac, after having furtively kissed it.

"Now it is giving out the loveliest perfume," said she. "The warmth of my bosom has made it exhale its shy, modest flower-soul."

"'T is you who have scented it," returned Sigognac, putting the flower to his lips to snatch from it the kiss Isabella had placed there. "Its delicate and suave odour passes all earthly scents."

"Too bad," said Isabella. "I merely give you a flower to smell, and straightway you must indulge in concetti turned after the style of Marini — just as if, instead of being out on the open, you were in the reception-room of some illustrious *précieuse*. There is no escaping it; you reply with a madrigal to the most commonplace remarks."

Nevertheless, in spite of her pretended annoyance, it was plain that the young actress did not greatly object to Sigognac's compliments, for she took his arm again, and even leaned upon it rather more than was actually necessary, considering how light was her tread as a rule, and the fact that the road at this point was as smooth as a garden walk; which goes to prove that the most virtuous of women are not insensible to praise, and that modesty itself knows how to reward flattery.

The van was slowly ascending a fairly steep hill, at the foot of which lay a few huts, which apparently had not had the courage to ascend higher. The inhabitants had all gone into the fields to work, and there was no one by the roadside but a blind beggar, accompanied by a boy, who had remained there, no doubt, for the purpose of asking alms of travellers.

The blind man, who seemed bowed with age, chanted through his nose a sort of lamentation, in which he mourned over his affliction and begged passers-by to have pity on him, assuring them that they would have his prayers and admission to Paradise in return for their bounty. His doleful drone had for some time become audible to Isabella and Sigognac, sounding like an importunate and disagreeable monotone as they talked of their loves. The Baron, indeed, was becoming annoyed, for it is not pleasant to have a crow croaking near when listening to a nightingale.

As they came up to the old beggar, the latter, warned by his guide, redoubled his lamentations and prayers, and in order to excite them to generosity, shook a wooden saucer in which chinked a few farthings, pennies, silver coins, and other small moneys. He had a ragged band round his head, and his back, bowed like the arch of a bridge, was covered with a thick, coarse, and very heavy brown wool blanket, better fitted for a beast of burden than for a man, and which the fellow had no doubt inherited from some mule dead of farcy or mange. The whites only of his upturned eyes showed, and looked horrible in his brown, wrinkled face, the lower part of which was concealed by a long

gray beard, worthy of a Capuchin friar or a hermit, that came down to his waist, like the antipodes of the hair of the head. The only part of his body visible was his hands that issued from the fold of the blanket and with palsied trembling held the alms saucer. By way of proving his piety and his submission to the will of Heaven, the beggar was kneeling upon a few wisps of straw filthier than Job's famous dunghill. Pity could not help shuddering with disgust in presence of this human wreck, and the kindhearted bestowed alms, but looked away as they did so.

The lad who stood by the beggar's side had a wild and haggard mien. His features were almost wholly concealed by long black hair falling upon his cheeks; an old hat, much too large for him, and no doubt picked up in the gutter, shaded the upper part of his face, allowing the chin and mouth, with its fiercely gleaming white teeth, to show. His sole garment was a species of smock-frock, of coarse linen, much patched, through which the outline of his limbs, thin and muscular, and not devoid of a certain elegance, could be made out. His small, clean feet, stockingless and shoeless, rested red upon the cold earth.

Isabella was touched at the sight of this pitiful

couple which united the wretchedness of old age and tender youth; she stopped in front of the blind man, who was reciting his prayers with ever increasing volubility, his young guide's shrill voice forming an accompaniment, and felt in her pocket for a coin to bestow upon the beggar. Not finding her purse, she turned to Sigognac, and asked him to lend her a copper or two, which the Baron, notwithstanding the fact that he did not have much faith in the psalm-singing beggar, did most willingly. Like a well-bred man, he stepped forward himself and dropped the coin into the plate, in order to save Isabella from coming into contact with such vermin.

Then, instead of thanking Sigognac for the alms, the mendicant, an instant before so bowed and bent, drew himself up, to Isabella's terror, opened out his arms like a vulture flapping its wings ere it takes flight, shook out the folds of the great brown cloak under the weight of which he seemed to be sinking, drew it back to his shoulder, and cast it with a gesture very much like that of fishermen casting their nets in a river or pond. The heavy stuff spread out like a pall over Sigognac's head, upon which it fell, and hung down his body, for it was weighted along the edges, like the

edges of a net, so that he was at one and the same time deprived of sight and breathing, and the use of his hands and feet.

The young actress, terror-stricken, endeavoured to call out, but before she could utter a single scream she felt herself lifted up with uncommon swiftness. The old blind beggar, who had suddenly, by a miracle from hell rather than from heaven, become young and keen-sighted, had seized her under the arms, while the lad had caught hold of her legs. They both remained mute, and hurried her away from the road, stopping only behind a hovel, where waited a masked man riding a vigorous-looking horse. Two other men, also masked and mounted, and armed to the teeth, were ensconced behind a wall that prevented their being seen from the road, and stood ready to aid the first in case of need.

Isabella, half-dead with fright, was placed upon the pommel of the saddle, upon a pillion formed of a cloak folded several times. The horseman passed a leather belt round her waist and his own, and having completed these preparations with a rapidity that testified to his being well used to this sort of risky business, he spurred his horse and started off at a gallop. Evidently

the animal did not mind carrying a double load, though it is true that Isabella was a very light weight.

All this occurred in less time than it takes to write it. Sigognac was fighting to get clear of the folds of the sham mendicant's cloak, just like a retiary caught in his adversary's net. He stormed and swore, for he felt sure this was the result of some contrivance of the Duke de Vallombreuse for the purpose of getting hold of Isabella, but his struggles were in vain. Fortunately he bethought himself of drawing his dagger and slitting open the thick stuff under which he was pressed down, as the damned in Dante's poem are weighed down by copes of lead.

With two or three cuts he slashed his prison open, and like a falcon unhooded, cast a swift, piercing glance over the surrounding country. He caught sight of the ravishers cutting across the fields and apparently endeavouring to make for a small clump of wood not very far distant. The blind beggar and the boy had vanished, having probably hidden themselves in a ditch or under the bushes. But it was not such small game that Sigognac was after; casting aside his cloak, that would have hindered his speed, he hastened in pursuit of the rascals with desperate fury. He was tall, well

knit, and cut out for a sprinter; in his youth he had often contended in trials of speed with the fastest runners among the boys of the village. The abductors, as they turned in their saddles saw the distance between them and the Baron diminishing; one of them let fly a shot at him in order to stop him, but the bullet went wide, Sigognac taking care, as he ran on, to spring now to the right, now to the left, to prevent their hitting him. The man who had charge of Isabella was doing his best to forge ahead, leaving his companions to settle Sigognac, but the girl, being placed upon the pommel of the saddle, hindered him from guiding his horse, as she kept struggling and trying to slip to the ground.

Sigognac was coming up fast, the ground being now unfavourable to the horsemen; he had drawn his sword, without stopping in his run, and carried it with the point up. But he was on foot, single-handed against three men, and his wind was beginning to fail him. He made a tremendous effort, and in three or four strides came up to the fellows who were protecting the abductor's flight. To save wasting time fighting them, he goaded with the point of his rapier the quarters of their horses three or four times, reckoning that thus

spurred on they would in all probability make a bolt of it. Nor was he disappointed; maddened with the pain, the horses reared, lashed out with their heels, took the bit in their teeth, and in spite of the efforts of their riders to hold them in, got their heads down and started off as if the devil were after them, utterly careless of ditches and other obstacles, so that in a twinkling they were out of sight.

Breathless, his face streaming with perspiration, feeling as if his heart would burst at any moment, Sigognac at last overtook the masked man who held Isabella fast upon the horse's withers. The girl kept crying out, "Help! Sigognac, help!" "I 'm coming," panted the Baron, in a broken voice and breathing hard; and with his left hand he clutched the belt that bound Isabella to the brigand. He tried hard to pull him off his saddle, as he ran by the horse's side like the equerries the Romans called *desultores;* but the rider took a harder grip with his knees, and it would have been as easy to pull off a centaur's torso as to unhorse him. At the same time he scored the flanks of his mount with his spurs to make it gallop faster, while trying to shake off Sigognac, whom he could not strike at, having as much as he could do to

hold Isabella and keep the bridle in his hands. The horse's speed being thus interfered with, Sigognac was enabled to recover his wind in part, and he even turned the opportunity to account by attempting to run his adversary through. Fearing, however, to wound Isabella, he did not thrust hard enough, and the rider, letting go the bridle for a moment, drew a knife from his jacket, and cut the belt to which Sigognac was clinging with desperation. At the same time he drove his spurs deep into the bleeding flanks of his poor steed, and sent it flying forward with irresistible impetuosity. Sigognac, caught unawares, for he had not foreseen the trick, and having lost the support he had clung to, fell heavily on his back, still holding the leather belt. He picked himself up with the greatest agility and got hold of his sword, that had flown some yards away, but quick as he was, the brief respite had enabled the horseman to gain a lead which it was hopeless for the Baron to expect to reduce, tired as he was by his mad race and the unequal struggle.

Nevertheless, spurred on by the cries of Isabella, growing ever and ever fainter, he dashed once again in pursuit of the ravisher — the useless effort of a true man who sees the woman he loves snatched from him. He

steadily lost ground, however, and the horseman had already reached the wood, the branches of which, though leafless, were dense enough to conceal the direction the rascal was taking.

Maddened with rage and overwhelmed with grief, Sigognac was compelled to stay his steps and to leave his dear Isabella in the clutches of the fiend; even with the aid of Herod and Scappino, who had leapt from the van at the sound of the firing, in spite of the efforts of the rascally lackey to prevent their doing so when he saw that they scented mischief, Sigognac could not succour her.

In a few words, spoken breathlessly, Sigognac informed his friends of what had happened and of the abduction of Isabella.

"Vallombreuse has a finger in the business, I 'll be bound," said Herod. "I wonder if he got an inkling of our trip to the château de Pommereuil, and if he laid this trap for us? Nay, may not the engagement itself, with the prepayment of a large sum, have been merely a trick to lure us out of the city, where it would have been both dangerous and difficult for him to try such games? If it be so, the scoundrel who played the part of the majordomo is the greatest actor I have

ever seen. I would have sworn the fellow was the simple-minded steward of a great house, and a very pattern of every virtue and quality. However, as there are three of us, let us search the wood in every direction to see if we cannot find a trace at least of poor Isabella, whom personally, tyrant though I am, I love more than myself. Alas! I greatly fear the innocent fly has been caught in the web of a wicked spider that will destroy her before we can rescue her from the too well woven web."

"I shall crush the life out of him," said Sigognac, stamping on the ground with his heel, as though the spider were under his foot. "I shall crush the life out of the venomous beast!"

And the fierce expression of his usually gentle and quiet face showed that this was no empty threat, but that he would do precisely what he said.

"Come," said Herod, "let us lose no more time in talk. Let us enter the wood, and examine it thoroughly. The game cannot be very far off."

And sure enough, when the party reached the other edge of the coppice, having made their way through the underbrush that caught their legs and the branches that slapped their faces, they saw a coach, with the

blinds closed, driving off at the top-speed of four post-horses urged on by the smart cracking of whips. The two horsemen whose mounts Sigognac had caused to bolt, having at last managed to regain control over them, were galloping one on each side of the coach, and leading the horse of the masked man, who had entered the carriage, no doubt to prevent Isabella raising the blinds and calling for help, or even leaping to the ground at the risk of losing her life.

Unless they had possessed the seven-league boots which Jack the Giant-Killer so cleverly stole from the ogre, it was madness to attempt to run after a coach driven at such a pace and so well escorted. All Sigognac and his companions could do was to note the direction taken by the party, though that did not promise to aid them much in recovering Isabella. The Baron did try to follow the tracks of the wheels, but the weather was dry, and the tires had left but slight marks on the hard ground. Then they were mixed up with the tracks of other carriages and chariots that had travelled over the road during the previous days. When he reached a point where four roads met, the Baron entirely lost the line, and remained more embarrassed than Hercules was between Pleasure and Virtue. The little company

therefore returned, much put out, to the van in which the remaining members of the company were waiting for them, very anxious to know the particulars of the affair.

At the very outset of the attack the lackey had hurried on the van, although the players had kept shouting to him to stop, and when the Tyrant and Scappino, on hearing the sound of the pistol-shot, had got out in spite of him, he had spurred his horse, leapt the ditch, and bolted towards his accomplices, caring little henceforth whether the company of players reached the château de Pommereuil or not; supposing the château existed, a fact they were inclined to doubt after what had happened.

Herod inquired of an old woman who came by, carrying a faggot of wood upon her hump back, whether they were still far distant from the château de Pommereuil. The old woman answered that she did not know of any estate, village, or château of that name anywhere within a radius of many miles, and she ought to know, since she had been travelling over the country-side for seventy years in pursuit of her calling, begging and seeking a wretched livelihood on every road and byway.

MALARTIC AT WORK

It was becoming perfectly plain that the tale of a play to be given was a trick got up by deep and clever rascals in the pay of some great lord, — Vallombreuse, undoubtedly, since he was known to be in love with Isabella, — and that the working of the plot must have called for many men and much money.

The vehicle started back towards Paris, but Sigognac, Herod, and Scappino remained on the spot, intending to hire horses at the nearest village, with a view to seeking out and pursuing the abductors more efficiently.

Isabella, after seeing the Baron fall, had been carried to a clearing, taken down from the horse, and placed in the carriage, in spite of her frantic efforts to get free; the whole business not taking more than three or four minutes. Then the carriage had driven off with a thunder of wheels, like the car of Capanea across the brazen bridge. Opposite to her sat respectfully the masked man who had carried her off on his saddle-bow.

She attempted to look out of the window, but immediately the man put out his hand and stopped her. Isabella, finding herself powerless in his iron grasp, sat down again and began to cry out, in hopes of being heard by some passer-by.

"I beg you will be quiet, Miss," said the mysterious abductor, in the most polite manner, "and not compel me to make use of physical constraint in the case of so charming and adorable a person as you. No harm is intended you; on the contrary, your advantage alone is thought of. Do not, therefore, persist in useless revolt. If you behave quietly I shall treat you with all respect; a captive queen could not ask for more. But if you make a fuss, if you insist on calling out and seeking help that will not come, I have means to reduce you to silence. This shall stop your tongue, and this your jumping about."

So saying he drew from his pocket a cleverly constructed gag and a long silk cord rolled up in a ball.

"It would be barbarous to make use of such a muzzle or bit on so blooming, so rosy, and so mellifluous a mouth, and rope bonds would ill suit, you must own, dainty and delicate wrists intended to be adorned with golden bracelets studded with diamonds."

Angry and desperate though the young actress was, she had perforce to yield to these arguments, for they were unquestionably sound. Physical resistance could serve no useful purpose. Isabella, therefore, settled herself in the corner of the carriage and remained

silent. But deep sighs broke from her, and from her lovely eyes tears rolled down upon her pale cheeks, like rain drops upon a white rose. She was thinking of the dangers to her virtue and of Sigognac's despair.

"After the hysterics come tears," said the masked man to himself. "Matters are running their regular course. I am glad of that, for I should hate to have to act brutally to so lovely a girl."

Crouching in her corner, Isabella cast from time to time a timid glance at her keeper, who perceived it and said to her in a voice he endeavoured to soften, though it was naturally harsh: —

"You have nothing to fear from me, Miss; I am a well-bred man, and I shall not take any liberties with you. Had fortune been kinder to me, I should certainly not have abducted you for another man's benefit, for you are assuredly virtuous, beautiful, and talented; but the ill-will of fate sometimes compels one to deeds not wholly defensible."

"So you confess," said Isabella, "that you have taken money to abduct me? — a most infamous, abominable, and cruel deed."

"Considering what I have done," returned the masked man quite coolly, "it would be idle to deny it.

There are, on the streets of Paris, a certain number of philosophers of my kidney. We have no passions of our own, but in return for gold we interest ourselves in the passions of others and enable these mortals to satisfy their desires by placing our talents and our courage, our brains and our strength at their service. But let us change the subject. You were delightful indeed in that last play your company gave. You recited the lines in the confession scene with unequalled grace, and I applauded you roundly. If you noticed a pair of hands that clapped like thunder, you now know they were mine."

"In my turn I shall say to you: drop such unseasonable compliments, and tell me whither you are taking me, against my will and in violation of law and propriety."

"That I may not tell you; besides, it would be of no use if I did. We are bound to secrecy, like priests and physicians; the most absolute discretion is imperative in such occult, perilous, and out of the way affairs, which are often conducted by anonymous and masked shadows. Frequently, by way of greater security, we do not even know for whom we are working, and he does not know us."

"So you are not aware whose hand it is that has urged you to the despicable and wicked action of abducting a young girl?"

"Whether I know it or not matters not at all, since my mouth is closed by the sense of duty. If you think of the lover you have treated worst and who is the most devoted to you, I fancy you will hit upon the man."

Seeing that she would get nothing more out of him, Isabella refrained from again speaking to her keeper. Besides, she had not the least shadow of a doubt that Vallombreuse was the instigator of the wicked deed, for she remembered the threatening way in which, standing on the threshold of her door, on the occasion of his visit to the Rue Dauphine, he had said, "Au revoir, Miss." Considering how determined the man was and how mad his desires, these words boded no good to her. The belief increased the terrors of the poor actress, who turned pale as she thought of the way her virtue would be attacked by that haughty lord, who was more offended than in love with her. She trusted that Sigognac's courage would enable him to come to her assistance, but would that valiant and faithful friend manage to discover in time the hidden retreat to which her ravishers were taking her?

"In any case," said she to herself, "if that wicked Duke attempts to outrage me, I have Chiquita's dagger in my bosom, and I shall sacrifice my life to my honour."

For two hours the carriage drove on at the same pace, stopping only for a few minutes to change horses at a relay arranged for beforehand. As the blinds, which were pulled up, prevented her seeing outside, Isabella was unable to make out in what direction she was being driven. She did not know that part of the country, it is true, but had she been able to look out, she would have got her bearings in a fashion with the help of the sun. As it was, she felt herself borne away to the unknown.

Presently the sound of the wheels as they rolled over the iron-bolted beams of a drawbridge warned Isabella that she had reached her destination. She was right; the carriage stopped, the door was opened, and the masked man offered his hand to the young actress to assist her to alight.

She cast a glance around her, and saw a great court, square in form, bounded by four large connected buildings, the rich brick colour of which time had turned to a rather gloomy tone. The inner façades were pierced

by tall, narrow windows, and through the greenish panes could be seen the closed shutters, a proof that the rooms had long been uninhabited. Every paving-stone in the court was set in a framework of moss, and the grass was growing at the foot of some of the walls. At the base of the outer steps two sphinxes, modelled in the Egyptian style, stretched out their blunted claws upon their pedestals, their quarters stained with the gray and yellow leprous lichens that grow upon old stones. Nevertheless, in spite of the mournful look characteristic of dwellings uninhabited by their owners, the place had a very aristocratic appearance. It was deserted, not abandoned, and no trace of decay was visible; the body was whole; the soul only was wanting.

The masked man handed Isabella over to the care of a lackey in a gray livery, who led her up a broad staircase, the balustrade of which was richly ornamented with the scroll-work and arabesques in wrought iron that had been the fashion in the reign of the late king. He introduced her into an apartment that had no doubt been formerly a model of luxury, and which in its faded richness was quite equal to the most elegant of modern suites. The walls of the first room

were wainscotted with old oak, the design representing architectural forms, pilasters, cornices, and frames of carved foliage filled with Flanders tapestries. In the next room, which was also pannelled in oak, though the ornamentation was richer and set off with gilding, the tapestries were replaced by allegorical paintings, the meaning of which it was rather difficult to make out under the thick coating of smoke and the layers of yellow varnish. The darker parts were undistinguishable, and only the lighter portions could be made out. The effect produced by the figures of divinities, nymphs, and heroes that half emerged from the shadows and of which only the luminous parts showed, was strange indeed, and in the evening, in the dim light of the lamps, became almost terrifying.

The bed stood in a deep alcove, and was covered with a counterpane of tapestry wrought most delicately in fine stitches, and striped with bands of velvet. It was a magnificent piece of work, but the colouring was dulled. Threads of gold and silver gleamed amid the faded silks and wools, and bluish blotches shimmered on the surface of the stuff, that had once been red. On a marvellously carved dressing-table stood a Venetian mirror in which Isabella was able to note the pallor

and the change in her features due to her distress. A large fire, a token that the young actress's arrival was expected, was burning on the hearth, the mantel of which was a huge piece of stone-work, supported by Hermes ending in cases, and laden with volutes, brackets, wreaths, and ornaments rather heavy in design, and in the centre of which was set the portrait of a man whose expression struck Isabella. The face was somewhat familiar to her; she recalled it vaguely, as one recalls faces seen in dreams that, instead of vanishing when one awakens, keep haunting one in real life. It was a pale face, with dark eyes, red lips, and brown hair, — the face of a man of forty, and stamped with aristocratic pride. The man wore a burnished steel breastplate, inlaid with gold ornaments and crossed by a white scarf. In spite of her preoccupation, and of the very natural terror she felt at being where she was, Isabella could not help looking at the portrait, and her eyes constantly returned to it as if it exercised a fascination upon her. The features had some resemblance to those of Vallombreuse, but their expression was so different that the likeness speedily vanished.

She was still sunk in reverie when the lackey in gray livery, who had left her for a moment, returned with a

couple of valets bearing a table laid for one person and said to the prisoner: —

"Dinner is served, Madam."

One of the valets silently placed an arm-chair for her, and the other removed the cover of the tureen of old massive silver, from which rose a cloud of odorous steam that told of a most succulent broth.

Isabella was in deep distress, yet she felt very hungry, and was annoyed with herself on that account, just as if nature did not assert its rights under any circumstances; reflecting, however, that the dish might contain some narcotic intended to render her helpless against outrage, she stopped and pushed back the plate in which she already dipped her spoon.

The lackey in the gray livery appeared to divine her fear, and tasted, in her presence, the water, wine, and dishes placed upon the table. Somewhat reassured, the captive took some of the soup, ate a little bread and a wing of the chicken; after which, feeling somewhat nervous in consequence of the agitation she had undergone during the day, she drew her chair to the fire and remained there for a time, her elbow resting on the arm of the chair and supporting her chin in her hand, and her mind filled with vague apprehensions.

Then she rose and drew near to the window to see what lay outside. There was neither bar, grating, nor anything suggestive of a prison, but when she bent forward and looked down, she saw, at the foot of the wall the greenish, stagnant waters of a deep moat that ran round the château. The drawbridge which she had crossed in the carriage was raised, and unless a man were to swim the moat, there was no means of establishing communications with the outer world. Even then it would have been exceedingly difficult to climb up the perpendicular stone revetment wall of the moat. The view beyond was closed in completely by a sort of boulevard, formed of trees of very great age, planted the whole way round the château. From the windows there was nothing visible save the interlaced branches, which, though leafless, prevented the sight from travelling far. There was evidently no hope of flight or rescue, and all she could do was to await the issue; a condition of things more wearing in its anxiety than the catastrophe itself.

Poor Isabella started at the least sound; the murmur of the waters, the soughing of the wind, the creaking of the wood-work, the crackling of the fire, sufficed to make a cold sweat break out all over her. She ex-

pected every minute to see a door or a panel open, revealing a secret passage, and in the dark opening *something*, man or phantom. Indeed, she would probably have dreaded the phantom less. As the twilight deepened, her terror increased, and when a tall lackey entered, bearing a candelabrum filled with lighted tapers, she nearly swooned away.

While Isabella was trembling with fear in her solitary apartment, her abductors, in a room on the lower floor, were carousing and feasting; they were to remain in the château and to garrison it, in the event of Sigognac leading an attack against it. Every man Jack of them was drinking like a fish, but one of them far surpassed his fellows in his capacity for holding liquor. It was the man who had carried off Isabella upon his horse, and as he had now laid aside his mask, it was easy for any one to gaze upon his chalky face, in the middle of which flamed a very red nose. The blazing proboscis enabled one readily to recognise Malartic, Lampourde's friend.

XVI

VALLOMBREUSE

ISABELLA, left alone in a strange room, in which danger might assail her at any moment in some mysterious form, was filled with inexpressible anguish, though her wandering life had trained her to be more courageous than the ordinary run of women. Yet there was nothing sinister in the old-fashioned but well-preserved elegance of the place. The flames played brightly upon the enormous logs on the hearth, and the tapers cast a dazzling light that filled even the most remote corners and dispelled both the darkness and the creations of fear. The room was pleasantly warm, and everything in it invited her to enjoy her leisure in comfort. The paintings in the panels were too brilliantly lighted to look fantastic, and the portrait of the man over the mantelpiece, in its carved frame, which Isabella had noticed, had not that fixed look which seems to follow one everywhere, and which is peculiarly disturbing in the case of some portraits. It

rather seemed to smile quietly and protectingly, like the face of a saint that may be invoked in times of danger. Yet the concourse of peaceful, reassuring, and hospitable things failed to relieve the nervous strain under which Isabella was labouring. Her nerves were as highly strung as the cords of a guitar; her quick, anxious glance wandered restlessly around, seeking to see and fearing to see, while her over-sharpened senses noticed with terror, in the deep silence of the night, the faint sounds that are the voice of silence. And Heaven knows what dreadful meanings she attached to them!

Ere long she became so wrought up that she resolved to leave the brightly lighted, warm, and comfortable room, and to venture through the passages of the château, even at the risk of meeting something dreadful, to see whether she could not discover some unguarded egress or some place of refuge. Having made sure that the doors of her room were not double-locked, she took from the side-table the lamp the lackey had left there for the night, and shielding the flame with her hand she started.

She first came upon the staircase with the rich balustrade up which she had been shown by the servant,

and she proceeded to descend it, reasoning correctly that there could be no egress on the first floor that would help her to escape. At the foot of the stairs, under the vestibule, she saw a great door, with two leaves, and turned the handle. The door opened with much creaking of wood and hinges that seemed to her to sound as loud as thunder, although in reality it was inaudible three yards away. The feeble flame of the lamp sputtering in the damp air of a room which had long remained closed up, revealed to the young actress, or rather enabled her to perceive indistinctly, a very large room, not in disrepair certainly, but bearing all the ear-marks of a place that has been uninhabited for a long time. Against the walls, hung with tapestries containing figures, were placed great oaken settles; trophies of arms, gauntlets, swords, and bucklers were suspended around, and flashed out unexpectedly. A heavy table with massive legs, against which the girl nearly bumped, stood in the middle of the room. She walked round it, and was terrified, on approaching the door opposite the entrance, and which led into the next room, to see suddenly two figures, armed from head to foot, standing motionless on sentry on either side of the door, their gauntleted hands crossed upon the hilts

of their mighty swords, the points of which rested on the ground. The beavers of their helms represented hideous birds' faces, the eyeholes simulating the eyes, and the nose-guards the beaks. On the helms rose, like angry fluttering wings, plates of iron fashioned in the form of feathers. The lower part of the breast-plates, reflecting a point of light, swelled in strangest fashion as though heaving and falling with the deep breathing of the wearers, while from the knee and the elbow pieces jutted a steel point, curved like an eagle's talon, and the end of the feet plates turned up like a claw. In the quivering light of the lamp held in Isabella's trembling hand, the two steel panoplies assumed a truly alarming appearance, well calculated to startle the most courageous. It was no wonder, then, the girl's heart beat so loud that she could hear it at the same time that she felt its pulsations in her throat; and bitterly did she repent having left her room to start on this nocturnal expedition of hers.

Finding, however, that the warriors did not move, although they could not have failed to notice her presence, and that they made no sign that they were about to brandish their swords and bar her farther progress, she drew near one of them and held the light

close to his face. The man-at-arms was in no wise disturbed by her action, and maintained his position with perfect unconcern. Isabella, emboldened, for she began to suspect the truth of the matter, raised his visor, which, when opened, merely showed the void of shadow. The two sentries were simply panoplies, curious German suits of armour, placed upon lay figures. But a poor prisoner wandering through a solitary castle at night, might well be excused for having mistaken them for men, so closely do these iron shells, fitted to the human body like statues of war, recall the human shape even when they stand empty, and indeed become more formidable on account of the sharpness of their angles and the bosses on the joints. In spite of her anxiety, Isabella could not keep back a smile when she saw how she had deceived herself, and like the heroes of tales of chivalry, once they have, by means of a talisman, broken the spell that prevented access to an enchanted castle, she bravely made her way into the farther hall without bestowing a thought upon the henceforth powerless pair of guardians.

It proved to be a vast dining-room, with high dressers of carved oak, on which faintly gleamed masses of silver plate: ewers, salt-cellars, spice-boxes,

bowls, swelling vases, and great dishes of silver or silver-gilt, the size of bucklers or chariot-wheels, and Bohemian and Venetian glass, of slender and fanciful shapes, that flashed blue, green, or red as the light fell upon it. Square-backed chairs were ranged round the table, apparently awaiting guests that would never come, but at night they might have served ghosts assembled to banquet together. The walls were pannelled half-way up, and above the pannelling were hung with old Cordova leather, goffered with gilt and patterned with flowers. As the light of the lamp fell upon it, it showed tawny and imparted to the darkness a warm and sombre richness. Isabella glanced at all this splendour, and hastened to pass through the third door.

This led into a third room which appeared to be the state drawing-room, for it was larger than the other halls, themselves of considerable size. The feeble light of the lamp failed to illumine its depths, and it died away, a short distance in front of Isabella, in yellow filaments like the rays of a star seen through a mist. Faint though it was, it nevertheless sufficed to make the darkness visible, and to give to the shadows monstrous and terrifying shapes, uncouth outlines filled in by fear. Phantoms seemed to be draping themselves

in the curtains, the arms of the chairs to be embracing spectres, while hideous larvæ were crouching in the corners, grimly coiled up on themselves, or hanging to the walls with bat-like claws.

Overcoming these terrors of the imagination, Isabella kept on her way, and saw at the end of the hall a lordly dais topped with plumes, and covered with coats of arms which it would have been difficult to make out, surmounting an arm-chair in the form of a throne, placed upon a carpeted platform reached by three steps. But it was all indistinct, confusedly seen, sunk in shadow, and revealed only by a chance gleam, and thus was invested with the grim, colossal grandeur of mysteriousness. The throne might have been intended for the presiding spirit of a Sanhedrim of spirits, and it required no great effort of the imagination to believe that a dark angel with vast black wings was seated upon it.

Isabella moved on faster, and the creaking of her shoes, light as was her step, sounded terribly loud in the silence.

The fourth room was a bedroom, partly filled with a huge bed with dark-red Indian damask curtains draping it about. Between the bed and the wall gleamed a

silver crucifix above an ebony prie-Dieu. Even in the daytime, a bed curtained in has a suspicious look; one cannot help wondering what there is behind the drawn curtains; and at night, in a deserted room a closely curtained bed becomes terrifying, for who is to know that it does not conceal a dead body or a living creature on the watch? Isabella thought she could hear the deep and regular breathing of a sleeper behind the closed curtains. Was it really so, or was it merely a fancy of hers? At all events, she had not the courage to make sure by flashing the light of her lamp between the folds of the red hangings.

Beyond the bedroom lay the library. In the cases, surmounted by busts of poets, philosophers, and historians that gazed upon Isabella with their great white eyes, numerous volumes, in disarray, exhibited their backs lettered with titles and figures, the gilding of which reflected the light of the lamp.

At this point the building formed a right angle, and the library thus opened into a long gallery running along another façade of the buildings looking out upon the court-yard. It was the gallery in which the family portraits were hung in chronological order. A row of windows ran opposite the wall on which they hung in

their rusty gilded frames. The windows were closed with shutters, in the upper part of each of which was cut an oval aperture, the cause, at that particular moment, of a peculiar effect. The moon had risen, and its beams reproduced the aperture in the form of an oval of light upon the opposite wall. It happened in some cases that this oval spot of bluish light fell upon the face of one of the portraits and formed a sort of whitish mask for it. Illumined by this strange light, the portrait appeared to be startlingly alive; the more so that, the rest of the body being lost in the shadow, the head, with its silvery pallor brought out suddenly into relief, looked like a carved face starting from its frame to watch Isabella pass by. Others, lighted merely by the reflection of the lamp, preserved under the yellow varnish their solemn, death-like attitude, but they were not the least sinister in the collection, for the souls of the ancestors they represented appeared to be gazing out of the dark eyes as through openings made for that special purpose.

Isabella displayed, while traversing this gallery hung with fantastic faces, as much genuine courage as does a soldier who marches forward under the fire of the enemy. A cold sweat moistened her chemisette

between her shoulders, and she could not keep back the conviction that the phantoms in cuirasses and doublets covered with orders of knighthood, and the dowagers with huge ruffs and extravagant farthingales had got down from their frames and were following her in funereal procession. She even fancied she heard the shuffling of their shadowy steps upon the floor behind her.

At last she reached the end of the wide gallery, and came upon a glazed door leading into the court. She opened it, hurting her fingers somewhat in the operation of turning the old rusty key in the lock, and taking care to place her lamp where she could easily find it on her return, she emerged from the gallery, the abode of terror and of nocturnal illusions.

On beholding the open sky, in which twinkled a few silvery stars the light of the moon had not eclipsed, Isabella experienced a sensation of deep and delightful joy, as if she were returning from death into life. She fancied that God could now see her from His firmament, for He might well have forgotten her when she was lost in the dense darkness, under the heavy ceilings and in the maze of rooms and passages. While her condition was in no way bettered, she felt

as if a heavy burden had been lifted from her heart. She continued her exploration, but found that the court was carefully closed in at every point, like the outer wall of a fortress, save where a postern or brick arch opened out, upon the moat, probably, for Isabella, on bending forward, felt the humid coolness of the deep waters strike her like a breath of wind, and heard the faint lipping of the ripples against the foot of the wall. This was probably the passage through which provisions were brought into the château, but to approach or to leave it a boat was needed, and this, no doubt, was secured at the foot of the rampart or in some basin beyond her reach.

Escape, therefore, was as impossible in this direction as in every other, and this fact accounted for the relative liberty she enjoyed as a prisoner. Her cage was left open, like that of exotic birds transported on ships, for the men well know that the birds will be forced to return and perch in the rigging after a short flight, as the nearest land is so far distant that they would be tired out ere they reached it. The moat around the castle answered the purpose of the ocean around the ship.

In one corner of the court a ray of reddish light

filtered through the shutters of a lower room in a dark corner, and sounds issued from it into the silence of night. The young girl proceeded in the direction of the light and the sound, impelled by a very natural curiosity. Looking through the crack of one of the shutters, less well closed than the others, she easily made out what was going on inside.

Round a table lighted by a three-branched lamp, hung from the ceiling by a brass chain, a number of fellows of fierce and truculent mien were roystering. Isabella easily recognised among them, though she had seen them with masks on only, the scoundrels who had abducted her. They were Piedgris, Tordgueule, La Râpée and Bringuenarilles, whose personal appearance corresponded fitly with these lovely appellations. The light falling from above shone on their brows, shadowed their eyes, brought out the ridge of their noses, and touched up their huge mustaches in a way that still further exaggerated the savage look of their faces, which did not need to be thus made still more frightful. Somewhat apart from them, at the end of the table, was seated, as being a country brigand not yet entitled to rank with Paris ruffians, Agostino, who had removed the false beard and wig he had used in

playing his part of a blind beggar. In the place of honour was enthroned Malartic, unanimously elected ruler of the feast. His face was paler and his nose redder than usual, a phenomenon accounted for by the array of empty bottles ranged on the dresser like the bodies of the dead borne away from the scene of battle, and by the number of full bottles which the cellarer placed in front of him with indefatigable alacrity.

In the confused conversation of the topers, Isabella caught here and there a few words the meaning of which she could not fathom, for they were expressions drawn from the slang of gambling hells, wine-shops, and fencing-rooms, sometimes even from the hideous slang of the Court of Miracles, where are spoken the tongues of Egypt and of Bohemia. She could make out nothing that bore upon her situation, or the fate that awaited her, and feeling chilly, she was about to withdraw, when Malartic called for silence with such a tremendous blow upon the table that the bottles rocked as though drunk and the glasses clattered one against another with a crystalline tinkling answering to the C, E, G, B of the musical scale. The topers, pretty well drunk as they were, started on their benches, and every mug was straightway turned towards Malartic.

Profiting by this break in the tumult of the orgy, Malartic rose and said, as he raised his glass and made the wine in it sparkle in the light like the stone in a ring : —

" Lads, listen to this song which I have written, for I handle the lyre as cleverly as the sword. It is a drinking-song, as behooves a jolly toper. The fishes drink water, so they are deprived of speech ; if they were to drink wine, they would sing. Therefore let us show that we are men by seasoning our drink with melody."

" Song ! song ! " yelled Bringuenarilles, La Râpée, Tordgueule and Piedgris, who were utterly unable to follow such subtle dialectics.

Malartic cleared his throat with a repeated " Hum ! hum ! " and with all the airs and graces of a singer summoned to perform in the King's chamber, began to sing in a harsh voice, though in tune, the following couplets : —

" To Bacchus, toper illustrious,
We shout ' Hail ! ' and sing together.
Hurrah for the pure juice of the vine
That flows from the grapes when pressed!
Hurrah for its liquid rubies!

"We who are priests of the vine,
We wear the colours of the wine.
The bottle 't is that holds our rouge,
Wherewith we make our faces red
And blossoms rosy on our nose.

"Down with the man who water drinks,
Instead of wine both cool and strong!
Let him to the pint stoup kneel,
Or from a man to frog transformed,
Go sputter about in muddy swamp!"

The song was received with shouts of approval, and Tordgueule, who piqued himself on being a connoisseur of poetry, did not hesitate to proclaim Malartic the equal of Saint-Amant, a fact which goes to show how completely intoxication marred the gentleman's judgment. A bumper was ordered in honour of the singer, and when the glasses had been drained, every man upset his to show he had left no heel-taps and had conscientiously put away the whole of the liquor. This proved fatal to the weaker heads in the company: La Râpée slid under the table, where Bringuenarilles found him useful as a mattress. Piedgris and Tordgueule, being more seasoned topers, merely let their heads fall forward and fell asleep with their crossed

arms for pillows. As for Malartic, he sat straight up in his chair, his glass in his hand, his eyes staring, and his nose so brilliantly red that it seemed to send out sparks like a piece of iron fresh drawn from the forge fire. He kept repeating mechanically, with the solemn stupidity of a drunkard, and without any one joining in the chorus: —

> " To Bacchus, toper illustrious,
> We shout ' Hail! ' and sing together. . . . "

Disgusted with the sight, Isabella left the chink in the shutter and proceeded with her investigations, and thus came to the archway under which the chains and counterweights of the drawbridge, now raised, were placed. It was useless for her to attempt to work the heavy machinery, and as it was necessary to lower the drawbridge in order to get out, the captive saw herself compelled to give up all hope of escape. She returned to the place where she had left her lamp in the portrait gallery, and traversed the latter with less terror than before, for she was now acquainted with the cause of her former fears, and it is of the mystery of the unknown that fear is made up.

She passed quickly through the library, the state

drawing-room, and every apartment which she had previously gone through cautiously and timidly. The panoplies that had so terrified her now struck her as almost comical, and it was with deliberate steps that she ascended the stairs down which she had come a short time before with bated breath and lightest tread, lest she should awaken the faintest of echoes within the sonorous place.

Great was her terror, however, on entering her room, to perceive a strange figure seated by the fire-place. It was unquestionably no phantom, for the light of the tapers and of the fire illumined it too plainly to allow of the least doubt on the subject. It was a girl, of slender and delicate frame, it is true, but uncommonly alive, as was proved by the two great black eyes, the fierce glance of which, utterly unlike the lack-lustre glance of a spectre, was fixed with fascinating tranquillity upon Isabella, as she stood at the door. The girl's long brown hair, thrown back enabled every detail of her olive-complexioned face to be clearly seen; her thin features were bright and youthful, and her parted lips exhibited a splendid set of teeth; her hands, browned by the open air, but daintily shaped, were crossed on her bosom, and the

nails showed of a paler colour than the fingers. Her bare feet did not reach the ground, for her legs were not long enough to let them touch the floor when she was seated in a chair. Through the opening of a coarse linen shirt gleamed faintly the pearls of a necklace.

This necklace has enabled the reader to recognise Chiquita, and indeed it was she, still in the boy's dress, instead of that proper to her sex, which she had assumed to play the part of guide to the sham blind mendicant. The costume, which consisted of a shirt and wide breeches, became her very well, for she was at the age when it is difficult to tell a girl from a young boy.

As soon as she recognised the strange creature, Isabella recovered from the fright she had felt on beholding the unexpected apparition. Chiquita was not very formidable in herself, aside from the fact that she appeared to entertain for the young actress a sort of queer and fantastic gratitude, of which she had once already given proof.

Chiquita, while looking at Isabella, was humming the prose song she had hummed in wild fashion, with her body half in, half out of the round window, on the occasion of the first attempt to abduct Isabella at the

inn, — "Chiquita dances on top of railings; Chiquita slips through keyholes."

"Have you still got your knife?" said the queer girl to Isabella when the latter had drawn near the mantelpiece. "I mean the knife with the three red grooves."

"Yes, Chiquita," returned the young woman. "I carry it here, between my shift and my bodice. But why do you ask? Is my life in danger?"

"A knife," answered the child, with glistening, fierce glance, "a knife is a true friend, that does not betray its master if the latter gives it drink; for a knife grows thirsty."

"You frighten me, you wicked girl," said Isabella, moved by these words so sinister in their extravagance, but that, considering the situation she found herself in, might well be intended for a useful warning.

"Sharpen its point upon the marble of the chimney-piece," went on Chiquita, "and strop the blade upon the sole of your shoe."

"Why do you advise me to do that?" asked the actress, now very pale.

"For no reason whatever. But those who want to defend themselves make their arms ready."

These strange and disquieting remarks troubled Isabella, but, on the other hand, Chiquita's presence in her room reassured her. The child seemed to feel for her a sort of affection, which, though springing from a trifling cause, was none the less genuine. "I shall never cut your throat," Chiquita had said, and untamed though she was, this constituted a solemn promise, a treaty of alliance which she must not fail to carry out. Isabella was the one and only human creature, save Agostino, who had ever taken any kindly interest in her. Isabella it was who had given her the first piece of finery that had gratified her childish love of show, and as she was yet too young to feel jealousy, she artlessly admired the beauty of the young actress, whose face fairly fascinated her, the more that till then she had seen only drawn, ferocious faces that spoke of rapine, revolt, and murder.

"How comes it that you are here?" said Isabella, after a moment's silence. "Are you charged to keep watch over me?"

"No," answered Chiquita. "I came by myself, guided by the light and the fire. I was tired of sitting in a corner while the men were drinking down bottle after bottle of wine. I am so small, so young, and so

thin that no more notice is taken of me than of a cat asleep under the table. I made my way out when the din was at its worst. I hate the smell of wine and food, for I am used to the perfume of the heather and the resinous scent of the pines."

"And are you not afraid of wandering alone without a light through the long, dark corridors and the great rooms full of shadows?"

"Chiquita does not know what fear is; she can see in the dark and walk in it without stumbling. If I come upon an owl, the owl closes its eyes; if I meet a bat it folds up its membranes as I draw near. Phantoms stand aside to let me pass, or else they withdraw. Night is my comrade and conceals nothing from me. I know where are the owl's nest, the robber's hiding-place, the grave where the murdered man is buried, and the spot haunted by the spectre, but none of these secrets have I ever revealed to Day."

As she uttered these strange words, Chiquita's eyes burned with supernatural fire, and it was easy to see that, her mind having been excited by solitude, the child believed herself possessed of magic powers. The scenes of brigandage and murder she had witnessed from childhood had deeply impressed her ardent, un-

trained, and feverish imagination. Her absolute belief in herself reacted upon Isabella, who gazed upon her with superstitious apprehension.

"I like a good deal better to remain here by the fire with you," went on the little girl. "You are beautiful, and I enjoy looking at you. You are like the Blessed Virgin I saw on the altar; from a distance only, though, for they drove me from the church with the dogs, saying that my hair was unkempt and that my canary-yellow skirt would make the faithful laugh. How white your hands are! When I lay mine on them, they look like a monkey's paws. Your hair is fine as silk, and mine sticks out like a thorn-bush. I am dreadfully ugly, am I not?"

"No, my dear little one," returned Isabella, touched in spite of herself by the child's artless admiration. "You are beautiful in your own way, and all you need is to be dressed up a little bit to look as lovely as the handsomest girls."

"Do you mean it? Then I shall steal some fine clothes to dress myself up in, and Agostino shall love me."

And at the thought the child's tawny face flushed rosy red, and she remained for a time sunk in a deep, delightful reverie.

"Do you know where we are?" went on Isabella when Chiquita raised again her long, dark lashes she had lowered for a moment.

"In a castle that belongs to the nobleman who has so much money, and who tried to have you carried off in Poictiers. All I had to do then was to draw the bolt, and they would have had you. But you had given me the pearl necklace, and I would not give you pain."

"Yet this time you helped to carry me off," said Isabella. "Do you not love me any more, then, that you hand me over to my enemies?"

"Agostino ordered me to help, and I had to obey. Besides, if I had not come, some one else would have acted as guide to the blind man, and I could not have made my way into the castle with you. Here, I can be of use to you; I am courageous, agile, and strong, though I am small, and I will not have you harmed."

"Is this castle, where I am kept a prisoner, very far from Paris?" asked Isabella, drawing the girl to her lap. "Have you heard any of the men say what the name of it is?"

"Yes; Tordgueule said the place was called — Let me see. What did he call it?" answered the child, evidently puzzled.

"Try to remember it, my dear," said Isabella stroking Chiquita's brown cheeks, and thus causing the girl, whom no one had ever petted, to flush with pleasure.

"I think it is Vallombreuse," said she, speaking the words in syllables as if listening to a voice within. "Yes, I am sure of it now; it *is* Vallombreuse; the name of the nobleman your friend Captain Fracasse wounded in a duel. He had better have killed him, for the Duke is a very bad man, even though he does scatter gold in handfuls like a sower scatters grain. You hate him, don't you, and you would dearly like to get away from him?"

"Indeed I would, but it is impossible," said the young actress. "There is a deep moat round the château, and the drawbridge is raised. It is hopeless to attempt to escape."

"Chiquita laughs at gratings and locks, at walls and moats. Chiquita can escape when she pleases from the best-guarded prison, and fly up to the moon before the eyes of the astounded gaoler. If Chiquita liked, the Captain would know before the sun rises again, where is hidden the woman he is looking for."

Isabella concluded, as she listened to these words, that the child was crazy, but her face was quite calm,

her eyes shone clear, and she spoke with such an accent of conviction that this explanation was inadmissible. The strange creature certainly possessed, in part at least, the almost magical power she claimed.

As if to convince Isabella that she was not making any empty boasts, Chiquita said to her: —

"I shall leave this place presently; let me think a minute and find a way to do it. Do not speak, and hold your breath; the least noise disturbs me, and I have to listen to the Spirit."

She bowed her head, put her hands over her eyes in order to abstract herself, remained for a few moments in absolute immobility, then looked up, opened the window, climbed upon the sill, and looked intently out into the darkness. At the foot of the wall was heard the lapping of the dark waters of the moat ruffled by the night breeze.

"I wonder if she is going to take flight like a bat," said the young actress to herself as she followed Chiquita's motions.

Opposite the window, on the farther side of the moat, rose a high tree, centuries old, the great boughs of which extended horizontally partly over the ground and partly over the moat, though the extremity of the

nearest of them was quite eight or nine feet from the wall. It was by means of this tree that Chiquita proposed to escape. She stepped back into the room, drew from one of her pockets a very fine, very closely plaited hair-rope, forty to fifty feet long, unrolled it carefully on the floor, drew from another pocket a sort of hook, which she fitted to one end of the cord, returned to the window, and hove the hook into the branches of the tree. At the first attempt the iron hook failed to catch, and fell back with the rope, striking the wall with a clang; but at the second trial the sharp point struck in the bark, and Chiquita pulled the rope taut, begging Isabella to hang on to it with all her weight. The branch she had harpooned yielded as much as the flexibility of the trunk allowed, and was drawn five or six feet nearer the window. Then Chiquita made the rope fast to the iron-work of the balcony by a knot that would not slip, and hanging to the rope, she went with marvellous agility hand over hand to the branch, which she bestrode as soon as she felt it solid under her.

"Now cast off the knot, so that I can pull the rope over," she said to the prisoner in a low but clear voice, "unless you would like to come out the same way. I fancy, though, that you would feel frightened, and that

dizziness would make you fall into the moat. Good-bye; I am off to Paris, and I shall soon be back, for it is moonlight, and I can walk fast."

Isabella did as she was bidden, and the tree, no longer held, resumed its normal position and transported Chiquita to the other side of the ditch. In less than a minute, using her knees and hands, she had reached the bottom of the oak, and the captive saw her making off at a rapid pace, and soon lost sight of her in the bluish shadows of the night.

All that had just occurred seemed to Isabella like a dream. Half-stupefied, she had not yet closed the window, and was looking at the motionless tree, the bare branches of which showed black against the milky gray of a cloud interpenetrated by the diffused light of the orb of the moon, which it partially concealed. She shuddered as she noted how slender at its extremity was the branch to which the agile and courageous Chiquita had not hesitated to trust her life. She was moved at the thought of the affection shown for her by this wretched, wild girl, who had such lovely eyes, so bright and so passionate, the eyes of a woman in the face of a girl, and who showed such gratitude for so trifling a gift. But as she began to feel the damp, and her little

pearly teeth were beginning to chatter, she closed the sash, drew the curtains, and settled down in an arm-chair by the fire, her feet resting upon the brass balls on the andirons.

Scarcely had she seated herself when the majordomo entered, followed by the same two valets bearing a small table covered with a rich damasked cloth with lace fringe, on which was laid out a supper no less delicate and exquisite than the dinner had been. Had these men come in a few minutes earlier, Chiquita could not have got away. Isabella, still much agitated, did not touch the dishes set before her, and signed that she wished them to be removed. The majordomo caused to be placed by the bedside a tray on which were marchpane cakes and blancmange; and on an arm-chair a gown, cap, and dressing-wrapper heavily trimmed with lace, by one of the fashionable dress-makers. Great logs were thrown upon the mass of burning coals, and new tapers lighted. Then he informed Isabella that if she needed the services of a maid, one would be sent to her.

The young actress having signed that she wished no one, the majordomo withdrew, bowing most respectfully.

When the man and the lackeys had withdrawn, Isabella, throwing the wrapper around her shoulders, lay down fully dressed upon the bed, but not under the sheets, in order to be promptly up in case of alarm. She drew Chiquita's knife from her bosom, opened it, turned the ferule, and placed it within reach of her hand. Having taken these precautions, she closed her eyes and tried to sleep, but she found it hard to do so. Her nerves were upset by the occurrences of the day, and the fears of night were not calculated to reassure her. Besides, old uninhabited castles have a strange look during the hours of darkness; one feels as if one were disturbing some one in them, and as if an invisible host disappears, as one draws near, through a secret passage in the wall. All manner of inexplicable faint noises make themselves heard unexpectedly. A piece of furniture creaks; a death-beetle raps in the wood-work, a rat scampers behind the arras, a worm-eaten log explodes on the fire like a shell in a display of fireworks and wakes one up just as one is falling into a doze. This is just what happened to the young prisoner; she would start up with staring eyes, and look around the room; then, failing to notice anything out of the way, she would let her head sink again upon

the pillow. Sleep at last did lay hold of her sufficiently to separate the world of reality — the sounds of which ceased to reach her — from the land of dreams. Had Vallombreuse been there, he would have had a rare opportunity of satisfying his lust, for fatigue had rendered Isabella dead to all sensation. Happily for her, the young Duke had not yet reached the castle. This was not due to his having ceased to desire his prey now that he held it safe in his den, or to his passion having evaporated now that he was sure of being able to gratify it. He was much too tenacious of purpose, especially in evil, was the young and handsome Duke; and he took a certain perverse delight, outside of voluptuousness, in making a mock of all human and divine laws. The reason of his delay was that, in order to divert suspicion from himself when the abduction should become known, he had repaired that very day to Saint-Germain, had paid his court to the King, had followed the chase, and quietly talked to a number of people. In the evening he had gambled and lost, in the sight of all, sums so large that they would have meant much to any one less wealthy than he was. He had appeared to be in the best of temper, especially after having received a letter which a retainer of his had handed to

him with a deep bow, and which the man had brought at the top speed of his horse. It was the need of making absolutely certain that he could prove an alibi, in case an inquiry were set on foot, that had saved Isabella's virtue that night.

Her sleep was filled with disturbing dreams; at times she saw Chiquita running in front of Captain Fracasse, who was on horseback, and waving her arms like wings; at others she saw the Duke de Vallombreuse, his eyes flashing hatred and lust. At last she awoke, and was greatly surprised to find how long she had slept. The tapers had burned down to the sockets, the fire had gone out, and a bright ray of sunshine, entering in between the curtains, had taken the liberty of playing upon her couch, notwithstanding the fact that it had not been duly presented to her. The young girl felt greatly relieved at seeing the daylight. It was true that the danger of her position was in no wise diminished by it, but at all events that danger was not magnified by the mysterious terror which the bravest feel at night and in the presence of the unknown. Her content was short-lived, however, for the creaking of chains was heard, the drawbridge was lowered, the rattling of a carriage driven at full speed sounded upon

the planking, echoed under the archway like distant thunder, and died away in the inner court.

Plainly no one but the lord of the manor, the Duke de Vallombreuse in person, would enter in so masterful and haughty a fashion, and Isabella knew instinctively, as the dove knows that the hawk is soaring near, though it is still invisible, that the new-comer could be none else than her foe. Her lovely cheeks turned pale as wax, and her poor little heart beat an alarm in the fortress of her bodice, though it had no intention of surrendering. Soon, however, she mastered herself, and courageously prepared for the inevitable combat.

"If only Chiquita has managed to reach Paris in time and to bring me help!" she said, involuntarily looking at the portrait in the centre of the mantelpiece. "Do you, who look so noble and so good, protect me against the insolence and the wickedness of your descendant. Do not allow this place, in which your image shines, to witness the wreck of my honour!"

An hour elapsed, which the young Duke employed in repairing the disorder caused in his dress by the rapidity of his trip. Then the majordomo entered ceremoniously, and inquired of Isabella whether she

would do the Duke de Vallombreuse the honour of receiving him.

"I am a prisoner," answered the young woman, with much dignity, "and my reply is fettered like my person. Such a request, which would be courteous in ordinary circumstances, is derisive in my present condition. I am unable to prevent his lordship entering this room, which I have no means of leaving. I do not grant him permission to visit me; I have to put up with his doing so; I am helpless. Let him come, if he desires to do so, now or at any other time; it is a matter of indifference to me. Bear my words to him."

The majordomo bowed and withdrew, walking backwards, for he had received orders to treat Isabella with the greatest respect, and went to inform his master that the lady consented to receive him.

He returned in a few moments, and announced the Duke de Vallombreuse.

Isabella had half risen from her chair, but fell back deadly pale. Vallombreuse approached her, hat in hand, with every mark of the deepest respect. Seeing her shudder at his approach, he stopped half-way, bowed, and said in the tone that he knew so well how to render seductive: —

"If my presence be yet too painful to the lovely Isabella, and she require time to accustom herself to the sight of me, I withdraw. She is my captive, but I am none the less her slave."

"Your courtesy is belated," replied Isabella, "considering the violence you have had exercised upon me."

"That is the worst of driving people to despair by too stubborn a virtue," returned the Duke. "When a man is driven to despair, he is likely to go to extremes, for he knows that he cannot possibly be worse off. Had you suffered me to pay court to you, and shown yourself somewhat inclined to favour me, I should have been content to rank among your adorers, and to try gradually to tame your rebellious heart by dint of delicate gallantry, loving lavishness, chivalrous devotion, and ardent, though restrained, passion. I should have inspired in you, if not love, at least the tender pity which at times precedes and induces it. In course of time, it may be, you would have seen that your coldness towards me was unjust, for I should have stopped at nothing to prove that to you."

"Had you indeed made use of such honourable means," said Isabella, "I should have pitied your love, though I could never return it — since I mean never

to bestow it — and I should at least not have been driven to abhor you, a feeling foreign to my nature and which it pains me to experience."

"You hate me greatly, then?" said the Duke de Vallombreuse, in a voice that trembled. "Yet I do not merit that you should do so. Even if I have acted wrongly towards you, it is only because I love you; and there is no woman, however chaste and virtuous, who is really angry with a lover because of the effect her charms have upon him in spite of herself."

"Assuredly it is not a reason for aversion, provided the lover remains within the bounds of respect and breathes his passion with discreet timidity. The greatest prude will bear with so much; but when, insolently impatient, he at once resorts to the worst excesses and indulges in ambushes, abductions, and imprisonment, as you have not hesitated to do, then there is room for no feeling save that of invincible repugnance. Any heart in the least proud and self-respecting, will revolt against an attempt to bend it. Love is a divine thing, which can neither be compelled nor obtained by force, and it blows whithersoever it listeth."

"So all I am to expect from you is invincible repugnance?" said Vallombreuse, whose cheeks had

blanched and who had bitten his lips more than once while Isabella was speaking with the gentle firmness characteristic of the girl, who was as prudent as she was charming.

"There is one way in which you can regain my esteem and compel my friendship," she returned. "Restore to me the liberty of which you have deprived me. Have me taken back to my comrades, who are anxiously wondering what has become of me, and who are looking for me distractedly. Let me return to my humble life of an actress before this adventure is known, which will ruin my reputation if, in consequence of the public wondering what has become of me, it is bruited abroad."

"It is a great pity," answered the Duke, "that you should ask for the one thing I cannot grant you without doing myself a wrong. Did you but desire a throne, an empire, I should bestow it upon you; a star, I should climb the heavens to fetch it for you. But you want me to open the door of this cage, to which you would never again return once you had escaped from it. It is out of the question. I am well aware that you have so little love for me that my only chance of seeing you is to keep you imprisoned. And though this course wounds my pride, yet am I com-

pelled to resort to it, for I can no more do without you than a plant can live without light. My thoughts turn towards you as towards the sun, and where you are not is deepest night for me. If it be criminal to do what I have ventured to do, at least I am bound to turn it to advantage, for, talk as you will, you will never forgive me. Here, at least, I have you, I am around you, I envelop your hatred of me with my love, I breathe upon the icicles of your repugnance with the hot breath of my passion. Your eyes cannot avoid reflecting my face; your ears must perforce hear my voice. In spite of yourself, a portion of my being penetrates within your heart; I have influence over you, even though only through the terror I cause you, and the sound of my step in the antechamber makes you start. Then, too, this captivity separates you from the man you love, and whom I hate because he has taken a heart that should have been mine. My jealousy is satisfied to be content with so mean a pittance of happiness, and I will not risk the loss of it by restoring to you a liberty you would at once use against me."

"And how long do you intend to keep me thus closely confined, not as a Christian gentleman would do, but a Barbary corsair?"

"Until you love me, or say you love me, which is one and the same thing," returned the young Duke, quite seriously and apparently meaning just what he said.

He then bowed very gracefully to Isabella, and went out in the most self-possessed way, like a thorough-bred courtier whom no circumstances can ever embarrass.

Half an hour later a lackey brought a bouquet, composed of the rarest flowers, that mingled their colours and their perfumes. For the matter of that, all flowers were rare at that time of year, and it had taken all the skill of the gardeners and the artificial summer of the hot-houses to induce these daughters of Flora to bloom prematurely. The bouquet was fastened with a magnificent bracelet, fit for a queen, and among the flowers there was a white paper, folded, that attracted the glance. Isabella took it, for, in the situation in which she found herself, the small change of gallantry had lost all meaning.

She recognised the hand which had written "For Isabella" upon the jewel casket in Poictiers; for the paper was a note from Vallombreuse, written in the following words, the handwriting being bold, as befitted the gentleman himself: —

"DEAREST ISABELLA, — I send you these flowers, though I feel sure they will not prove welcome. Coming from me, your unparalleled coldness will think them lacking both in beauty and in scent. But no matter what may be the fate that awaits them, even if all you do with them is to throw them out of the window by way of marking the intensity of your contempt for me, they will yet compel your angry thoughts to dwell upon me for an instant, were it only to curse him who, in spite of all, subscribes himself

"Your persistent lover,

"VALLOMBREUSE."

The note, euphuistic in its gallantry, and revealing in the writer a terrible steadfastness of purpose, that would not yield to any consideration, produced in part the effect the Duke had hoped for. Isabella held the paper in her hand, and her face was clouded, as Vallombreuse appeared to her in diabolical shape. The scent of the flowers, most of them foreign, and placed by the lackey upon the small table near her, became stronger in the heat of the room, and the exotic perfumes they gave out waxed more oppressive and heavier. Isabella took the flowers, and, without removing the

diamond bracelet with which the bouquet was fastened, threw them into the antechamber, fearing they might have been impregnated with some subtle narcotic or love philter, intended to act upon her senses. Never were beautiful flowers so badly treated, yet Isabella was very fond of them; only, she dreaded increasing the Duke's belief in his powers if she kept them. Then, also, the curious shapes, the strange hues, and the unknown scent of these exotics lacked the modest charm of ordinary flowers, and their proud beauty recalled too much that of Vallombreuse.

Scarcely had she deposited the proscribed bouquet upon a table in the next room and regained her arm-chair when a maid entered to assist her to dress. The girl was rather pretty, but very pale and sad and gentle-looking. Her actions were marked by an inertness indicative, apparently, of a feeling of secret terror or of subjection to a dread ascendency. She offered her services to Isabella almost without looking at her, and in a soundless voice, as though she feared the walls would hear her. In obedience to the affirmative sign made by Isabella, she combed her golden hair, which was very much disordered as a consequence of the scenes of violence of the previous day and the nervous

terrors she had suffered from during the night. The girl tied the silken curls with knots of velvet, and performed her task like a maid skilled in hair-dressing. Then she drew from a cupboard in the wall a number of dresses, wonderfully rich and elegant, which seemed to have been made purposely for Isabella. But the young actress, though her own gown was sadly rumpled and crushed, would have none of them, feeling that if she put one on she would seem to be wearing the Duke's livery, and she was irrevocably determined to accept nothing whatever from him, even at the cost of her imprisonment being lengthened even more than she anticipated.

The maid did not urge her, and respected her fancy, much as the whims of people condemned to death are gratified within the bounds of the prison. She looked as if she were trying to have as little to do with her temporary mistress as she could, lest she should become interested in her whom she could not help. She endeavoured as far as possible, to be a mere automaton, and Isabella, who had hoped to draw some information from her, saw that it was useless to question her, and yielded herself to her charge, not without a secret feeling of terror.

When the maid had withdrawn, the dinner was brought in, and Isabella, notwithstanding the painful situation she found herself in, did honour to it. Nature imperiously asserts her rights even over the most sensitive persons.

The meal restored Isabella's strength; a thing she stood much in need of, for the various emotions and combats she had had to pass through had tried her very high. Somewhat reassured, the prisoner took to thinking of Sigognac's courage, and the valiant way in which he had behaved; she felt, that though single-handed, he would have rescued her from the ravishers had he not lost some time in getting rid of the cloak with which the treacherous blind man had covered him. By this time he must have received word of her, and she never doubted that he was speeding on his way to defend her whom he loved more than his own life. As she thought of the danger to which he would be exposed in this perilous enterprise — for the Duke was not the man to let his prey escape him without resistance — Isabella's bosom swelled and tears filled her eyes. She was angry with herself for being the cause of these rivalries, and almost cursed her beauty as the source of the whole trouble. Yet she was modest, and had not,

through coquetry, tried, like most actresses and even many great ladies, to inflame passions around her.

She was still sunk in reverie when a sharp tap at the window startled her; one of the panes cracked, as though a hail-stone had struck it. Isabella drew near the sash, and saw in the tree opposite Chiquita, making signs to her to open the window, while she herself was swinging the hair-rope with the iron hook at the end of it. The imprisoned actress at once understood the child's wish, did what was expected of her, and the hook, thrown by a practised hand, caught on the rail of the balcony. Chiquita fastened the other end to the branch and trusted herself to it as she had done the night before; but she had not got half-way across, when, to Isabella's terror, the knot slipped and the rope came away from the tree. Instead, as was to be feared, of falling into the moat, Chiquita, who was in no respect disturbed by the accident — assuming that it was one — swung against the wall of the castle, below the window, which she soon reached by pressing with her hands and feet against the wall. Then she stepped over the balcony and sprang lightly into the room. Seeing Isabella pale and almost fainting, she smiled and said: —

"You were frightened, and thought that Chiquita was going to keep company with the frogs in the moat. But I had made a slip-knot only, so as to be able to haul the rope over. I suppose that when I was hanging at the end of the black rope, I must have looked like a spider climbing up her own thread, for I am dark and thin enough."

"You darling," said Isabella, kissing Chiquita on the forehead, "you are a brave and courageous girl."

"I have seen your friends, and I can tell you they had searched for you high and low. But for Chiquita, however, they would never have discovered where you were hidden. The Captain was raging like a lion; his forehead smoked and his eyes flashed. He put me on the pommel of his saddle, and he is now concealed with his comrades in a small wood not far from the castle. To-night, as soon as it is dark, they will make an attempt to set you free. There will be shots and sword-cuts, and a lovely time, for there is nothing to compare with men fighting. But take care not to get frightened and to scream. Women's cries upset a man's courage. If you like, I shall stay by you to keep up your courage."

"Fear nothing, Chiquita; I shall not hamper with

ridiculous fears the brave friends who are exposing their lives to save me."

"That 's right," answered the girl. "Until to-night defend yourself with the knife I gave you, and don't forget to strike from below upwards. As for me, as it is well that we should not be seen together, I shall find a corner in which I can go to sleep. Above all things do not look out of the window, for that would excite suspicion, and might suggest that you are expecting help from outside. In that case the grounds around the château would be searched, your friends be discovered, their attempt fail, and you would be left in the power of Vallombreuse, whom you detest."

"I promise you that, however great my curiosity, I shall not go near the window," said Isabella.

Reassured on this important point Chiquita disappeared, and returned into the lower room, where she joined the ruffians, who, stupefied with drink and sunk in bestial sleep, had not even noticed her absence. She leaned against the wall, crossed her hands on her bosom, in her favourite attitude, closed her eyes, and speedily dropped off to sleep; for in going to and from Vallombreuse and Paris her deer-like feet had travelled more than twenty-four miles during the past night. The

ride back, being a mode of travel to which she was not accustomed, had probably tired her still more. Though her frail body was really as tough as steel, she was fairly worn out, and she slept so soundly that she might have passed for dead.

"Wonderful how soundly children can sleep," said Malartic, who had at last awakened. "In spite of our bacchanalian revels, she has never once opened her eyes. Here, you fellows! you lovely brutes! Try to get up on your hind legs, and trot into the yard, where you can souse your heads in cold water. The Circe of drunkenness has turned you into swine; let that baptism make men of you again, and then we shall make a round of the place to see whether anything is being attempted in favour of the beauty whom his lordship of Vallombreuse has intrusted to our safe-keeping and whom we are charged to defend."

The desperadoes raised themselves with difficulty and staggered out of the door, in obedience to their chief's wise orders. When they were fairly sobered, Malartic took Tordgueule, Piedgris, and La Râpée with him, proceeded to the postern, undid the padlock that shackled the chain painter of the boat made fast to the kitchen water-gate, and soon the craft, propelled by a

pole and tearing away the mantle of glaucous aquatic lentils, reached a narrow set of steps in the side of the moat wall.

"You, La Râpée," said Malartic, when his men had climbed up the slope, "shall remain here to keep an eye on the boat, in case the enemy should attempt to seize it and get into the house that way. You strike me as not being very steady on your pins yet. The rest of us shall patrol round and beat the bushes a bit, to start the birds, if any there be."

Followed by his two acolytes, Malartic patrolled round the castle for more than an hour, but saw nothing suspicious. On returning to the starting-point, he found La Râpée sound asleep, leaning up against a tree.

"If we were regulars," he said to him, waking him up with a smashing blow of his fist, "I should have you shot for falling asleep while on duty, which is a thing absolutely contrary to sound military discipline. As I cannot have you shot, I forgive you, and merely condemn you to swallow a pint of water."

"I 'd rather have a couple of bullets in my brain than a pint of water in my stomach," replied the drunkard.

"That is a noble reply," returned Malartic, "and worthy of one of Plutarch's heroes. You are forgiven freely, but do not sin again."

The patrol re-entered the castle, and the boat was carefully made fast and padlocked with precautions worthy of a regular fortress. Satisfied with his inspection, Malartic said to himself: —

"If the lovely Isabella gets out of this, or if Captain Fracasse gets in — for both possibilities must be taken into account, — I am willing to have my nose turn white or my face red."

When she found herself alone, Isabella opened a volume of Honoré d'Urfé's "Astrea," which she found lying on a table. She tried to fix her thoughts on her reading, but her eyes alone followed the lines mechanically; her mind was far away, and was quite uninterested in the pastorals, which, besides, were already becoming old-fashioned. Tired at last, she threw away the book and crossed her arms to await events. She had made so many conjectures that she had grown weary of the process, and without attempting to divine in what manner Sigognac would effect her deliverance, she simply trusted to the brave fellow's thorough devotion.

Evening had come; the lackeys lighted the tapers, and soon the majordomo appeared and announced the visit of the Duke de Vallombreuse. The latter entered immediately and bowed with perfect courtesy to his captive. He was really a man of surpassing beauty and elegance, and his handsome face must have inspired love in any unprejudiced heart. His gallant form was admirably set off by a pearl-gray satin doublet, crimson trunks, wide-topped white leather boots, the tops filled with a mass of lace, and a silver brocade scarf supporting his sword, the hilt of which was studded with gems. It needed virtue and constancy such as Isabella's not to be moved by his appearance.

"I have come to see, adorable Isabella," he said, sitting down in an arm-chair close by her, "whether I shall meet with a more favourable reception than has been accorded to the bouquet I sent you. I am not conceited enough to suppose that such will be the case, but I mean to accustom you to see me, so to-morrow you shall receive another bouquet and another visit."

"Both will be fruitless," returned Isabella. "I regret having to be rude enough to say so, but my sincerity can leave you no hope."

"Very good," said the Duke, with a gesture of haughty indifference. "I shall do without the hope and be satisfied with the reality. You are apparently not aware, my dear girl, who Vallombreuse is, when you try to resist him. I have *never*, never allowed one of my desires to pass unsatisfied; I go straight to my end, and I am not to be moved or turned from my purpose, either by tears, supplications, cries, or dead bodies in my way, or smoking ruins. Were the world to fall to atoms, it would not disturb me, and I should satisfy my whim on the débris of the earth. So do not increase my passion by the attraction of the impossible, you imprudent girl who let the tiger smell the lamb and then snatch it away."

The change in the expression of Vallombreuse as he spoke terrified Isabella. The gracious look had disappeared, and his features revealed only cold wickedness and implacable resolution. Instinctively Isabella pushed back her chair, and felt in her bodice for Chiquita's knife. Vallombreuse quietly drew his chair nearer hers. He had mastered his anger and had regained the pleasant, playful, and tender look that he had hitherto found irresistible.

"Pray school yourself, and do not return to a life

which hereafter must be to you like a forgotten dream. Give up your obstinacy of chimerical fidelity to a languorous love unworthy of you, and remember that in the eyes of the world you belong to me now. Above all, remember that I adore you with a fury, with a madness of passion such as I have never felt for any woman. Do not attempt to escape from the flame that surrounds you, from the inflexible will that will not be swayed from its intent. Your indifference cast into my passion shall melt in it as melts the cold metal cast into the crucible where already boils molten ore. Do what you may, love me you shall, whether you will or no, because I will it, because you are young and beautiful, and I too am young and handsome. In vain shall you struggle and draw back; you will not unclasp the arms that are cast about you. So any resistance on your part would be unseemly, since it is useless. Resign yourself to your fate with a smile; for after all it is no great misfortune to be madly loved by the Duke de Vallombreuse. Such a calamity would be hailed as a piece of good fortune by most women."

While he was thus speaking, with a warmth that is apt to overcome the sounder sense of a woman and to make her forget her virtue, though on this occasion it

utterly failed of its purpose, Isabella, keenly attentive to the least sound coming from the outside of the château, the direction whence she looked for deliverance, fancied she could make out an almost imperceptible noise on the other side of the moat. It sounded low and rhythmical, as if men were working systematically and cautiously to remove an obstacle. Dreading that it should be heard by Vallombreuse, the young woman replied to him in a manner calculated to offend his intense self-conceit, for she preferred to see him angry than tender, and violent rather than amorous. Also she hoped, by arousing his quarrelsome mood, to prevent his noticing what was going on outside.

"I should avoid such felicity by committing suicide, if no other means were left me," she answered; "and you shall never have me save dead. You were indifferent to me; now I hate you for your outrageous, infamous, and violent conduct. Yes, I do love Sigognac, whom you have time and again sought to have murdered."

The faint noise was still audible, and Isabella, throwing away all fear, raised her voice in order to drown it.

On hearing her audacious declaration, Vallombreuse

turned white with rage; his eyes glittered like those of a snake; a slight foam rose to his lips, and he unconsciously laid his hand on the hilt of his sword. It flashed through his mind to kill Isabella, but by a powerful effort of his will, he recovered himself, laughed stridently, and approached the young actress.

"By all the devils in hell!" he cried, "I like you when you talk like that. When you insult me your eyes shine, your face flushes, and your beauty is increased amazingly. You are right to speak frankly, for I was tired of constraint. You love Sigognac, do you? I am delighted to hear it, for it will be all the pleasanter to possess you knowing that. It will be heavenly to kiss the lips that say to me, 'I abhor you!' It will be more piquant than the eternal and stale 'I love you!' which I am sick of!"

Terrified by the declaration, Isabella had risen and drawn Chiquita's knife from her bodice.

"Ha! very good," said the Duke, as he observed that the girl was armed. "You have your dagger out, I see. If you had not forgotten Roman history, my beauty, you would remember that it was not until after she had been assaulted by Sextus, son of Tarquinius Superbus, that Mistress Lucrece made use of her

dagger. I commend this example, drawn from antiquity, to you."

And minding the knife as little as he would have minded a needle, he closed upon Isabella, and clasped her in his arms ere she had time to raise her hand.

At this very moment a cracking sound was heard, immediately followed by a tremendous smash; the sash, as if smitten from outside by a giant, fell with a rattle of broken glass into the room, giving passage to a mass of branches that formed a sort of bristling catapult and flying-bridge.

It was the top of the tree by which Chiquita had escaped and returned. The trunk, sawn asunder by Sigognac and his companions, had yielded to the law of gravity, while it had been so guided in its fall as to connect the farther bank of the moat and Isabella's window.

Vallombreuse, startled by the sudden irruption of the tree that thus took part in a love scene, released Isabella and drew his sword, ready to receive the first man who should attack him.

Chiquita, who had entered on tiptoe, light as a shadow, plucked Isabella by the sleeve, and whispered to her: —

"Get behind the furniture; the fun is going to begin."

She was right: just then two or three shots were heard in the silence of night. It was the garrison, that had discovered it was being attacked.

XVII

THE AMETHYST RING

MALARTIC, Bringuenarilles, Tordgueule, and Piedgris climbed the stairs four at a time and rushed into Isabella's room to repel the assault and aid Vallombreuse, while La Râpée, Mérindol, and the Duke's ruffians in ordinary, whom he had brought with him, pulled across the moat in the boat in order to make a sortie and take the enemy in flank; a clever piece of strategy worthy of a skilful general.

As the top of the tree obstructed the window, rather a narrow one, and as the branches spread out to the centre of the room, it was impossible to present any extended front to the foe. Malartic therefore placed himself on one side by the wall, with Piedgris, and sent Tordgueule and Bringuenarilles on the other, so that they should not have to bear the first brunt of the attack and should be more advantageously placed. Before the rescuers could enter the place, therefore,

they would be compelled to break through the line of desperate ruffians awaiting them sword in one hand and pistol in the other. They had all put on their masks again, for not one of the gang cared to be recognised in the event of fortune proving adverse; and the sight of these four black-visaged men, motionless and silent as spectres, was distinctly terrifying.

"Withdraw or put on your mask," said Malartic to Vallombreuse in a whisper. "No good can come of your being recognised in this business."

"What care I for that?" replied the young Duke. "I fear no one; and those who may set eyes on me will have no chance of reporting the fact," he added, handling his sword in menacing fashion.

"At least take Isabella, Helen of another Troy, into the next room. A chance shot might spoil her beauty, which would be a pity."

The Duke, considering the advice sound, approached Isabella, who was hiding behind a coffer with Chiquita, and took her in his arms in spite of her efforts to resist Vallombreuse and to cling to the projections of the carving. The virtuous girl, overcoming the timidity of her sex, preferred to remain on the field of battle, exposed to bullets and sword-thrusts, that could have

deprived her of life only, to being alone with Vallombreuse, safe from the fighting but exposed to outrages against her honour.

"Let me go! let me go!" she cried, struggling and clinging with desperate efforts to the jamb of the door, for she felt that Sigognac could not be far off. At last the Duke managed to open one of the leaves of the door, and was about to drag the girl into the next room, when Isabella got away from him and ran to the window. Vallombreuse, however, compelled her to let go her hold, lifted her up, and bore her to the end of the room.

"Help!" she cried in a faint voice, feeling her strength leaving her. "Help! Sigognac!"

There was a sound of breaking branches, and a deep voice, that appeared to come from heaven, shouted into the room the words, "Here I am!" Swift as lightning a dark form broke through the four ruffians, with such speed that it had already reached the centre of the room when four pistol-shots rang out simultaneously. A cloud of smoke, spreading in dense convolutions, concealed for a moment the result of the volley. When it was somewhat dispelled, the ruffians saw Sigognac, or Captain Fracasse, rather, since that was

the only name they knew him by, standing sword in hand and unharmed, save for the loss of a part of the feather in his hat, the wheel-locks of the pistols having worked too slowly to allow the men to hit him in his quick dash. But Isabella and the Duke were gone, the latter having profited by the tumult to carry off his half-fainting prey. A heavy door and a strong bolt were interposed between the poor actress and her brave defender, who was already sufficiently handicapped by the lot of rascals he had to contend with. Fortunately, Chiquita, quick and slim as an eel, had, in hopes of being of use to Isabella, slipped in behind the Duke, who, in the confusion and the noise of the pistol-shots, did not observe her, especially as she quickly concealed herself in a dark corner of the large hall, ill lighted by a lamp placed upon a side-table.

"Scoundrels, where is Isabella?" cried Sigognac when he saw that the young actress was gone. "I heard her voice but now."

"You did not ask us to look after her," answered Malartic, "and besides we are but poor duennas."

As he spoke he dashed at the Baron sword in hand, and was received in right good fashion by the latter. Malartic was not an adversary to be trifled with; he

had the reputation of being the most skilful swordsman in Paris, next to Lampourde; but he was not fit to cope long with Sigognac.

"Watch the window while I polish off this fellow," said he, while thrusting and parrying, to Piedgris, Tordgueule, and Bringuenarilles, who were busy reloading their pistols as fast as they could.

Just then a new opponent burst into the room turning a summersault. It was Scappino, whose former experience as an acrobat and soldier made him singularly successful in that sort of storming. Casting a rapid glance around him, he saw that the ruffians had their hands full putting powder and bullets in their weapons, and that they had laid their swords down by their side. Quick as lightning he profited by the momentary surprise of the enemy, startled at his peculiar way of entering, seized the rapiers, and threw them out of the window. Then he dashed at Bringuenarilles, caught him round the waist, and made a shield of him, pushing him ahead of himself and turning him about so as to interpose the fellow's body between himself and the muzzles of the pistols.

"Damn it, you fellows, don't shoot!" howled Bringuenarilles, half choked by Scappino's muscular

grasp. "You will hit me in the back or in the head, and I should particularly dislike being killed by my comrades."

In order to prevent Tordgueule and Piedgris firing at him from behind, Scappino had prudently backed up against the wall, keeping Bringuenarilles in front of him; and with the view of disturbing their aim, he kept jerking the ruffian from side to side, so that the fellow, though his feet at times touched the ground, did not, like Antæus, regain strength by the performance.

It was a clever move, for Piedgris, who had no particular affection for Bringuenarilles, and who esteemed a man's life no more than a straw, even if the man were his comrade, aimed at Scappino's head, the latter being somewhat taller than the bravo. The pistol was discharged, but the player had bent down at the same time that he held up Bringuenarilles as a protection, and the bullet drove into the pannelling, cutting off the poor devil's ear on its way; whereupon the wounded man yelled out, "I am dead! I am dead!" in a way that proved conclusively that he was very much alive.

Scappino was not disposed to await a second shot, for he knew well that the bullet could reach him

through Bringuenarilles' body, the friends of the latter being quite unscrupulous enough to sacrifice him, and that thus he might be dangerously wounded; he therefore made use of the wounded man as a projectile, and hurled him so hard against Tordgueule, who was approaching and aiming at him, that the pistol was dashed from his hand and the ruffian went down pell mell with his comrade, whose blood spurted in his face. He fell so heavily that he remained for a moment stunned and bruised, giving Scappino time to kick the pistol under a piece of furniture and to draw his sword to defend himself against Piedgris, who, dagger in hand, was charging him, incensed at having missed him.

Scappino bent down, and with his left hand seized Piedgris' right arm, and forcibly held it up, while with the sword in his other hand he struck a blow that would undoubtedly have finished his opponent but for the thickness of the latter's buff jerkin. The blade did go through the leather, and pierced the flesh, but was turned aside by one of the ribs. Although the wound was neither mortal nor even serious, it took Piedgris aback and caused him to stagger, so that the actor, pressing suddenly upon the man's arm, for he

had not let it go, easily overthrew his opponent, who was already down upon one knee. By way of making sure of him, he hammered him over the head with his heel.

Meanwhile Sigognac was fighting Malartic with the cool fury of a man whose tried courage is served by superior skill. He parried the ruffian's every thrust and had already wounded him in the arm, as was shown by the sudden reddening of the rascal's sleeve. The latter, realising that if the fight went on he was a dead man, resolved to make a desperate attempt, and lunged out to his fullest extent to thrust straight at Sigognac. The blades rubbed against each other so sharp and hard that fire flashed from them, but the Baron's, held by an iron hand, turned off the bravo's warped sword; the point passed under Captain Fracasse's arm, scratching the stuff of his doublet, though without cutting it. Malartic recovered himself, but before he could get on guard Sigognac sent his rapier flying out of his hand, put his foot upon it, and placing the point of his own sword upon the fellow's throat, said: —

"Surrender or you are a dead man!"

At this critical moment the smaller branches of the tree were smashed by the irruption of a tall fellow who

plumped into the fight; perceiving Malartic's parlous state, the new-comer said to him authoritatively: —

"You may surrender without dishonour to that champion; he holds you at his mercy. You have done your duty faithfully. Consider yourself a prisoner of war."

Then, turning to Sigognac: —

"You may trust to his word; in his own way he is a man of honour, and will never attempt anything against you hereafter."

Malartic nodded assent, and the Baron lowered the point of his formidable sword. The ruffian picked up his weapon rather shamefacedly, sheathed it and sat down silently in an arm-chair, busying himself tying up his arm, on which the red spot was growing larger, with his pocket-handkerchief.

"As for these rascals who are more or less dead," said Jacquemin Lampourde, — for it was he, — "it will be as well to secure them; and therefore we shall, if you please, tie them up like fowls carried to market head down. They might turn over and bite, even if it were only at our heels. They are thorough-paced scoundrels, quite capable of malingering for the sake of saving their skins, little as these are worth."

Then bending over the prostrate bodies, he drew from his trunks ends of fine cord with which he made fast, with singular skill, the hands of Tordgueule, who showed fight, of Bringuenarilles, who yelled like one possessed, and likewise of Piedgris, although the latter was as still and as white as a dead body.

The fact that Lampourde was taking part with the besiegers is not to be wondered at, for he had conceived the liveliest admiration for Sigognac, whose admirable method in fencing had so charmed him when he had attacked the Baron on the Pont-Neuf, and he had then put himself at his disposal. Now his services were not to be disdained in circumstances as difficult and dangerous as the attack on the castle. Besides, it very often happened that comrades met sword or dagger in hand in the course of perilous enterprises of this sort, and that they did not mind in the least.

It will be remembered that La Râpée, Agostino, Mérindol, Azolan, and Labriche, who had crossed the moat in the boat at the outset of the attack, had left the château with the object of making a diversion and taking the besiegers in rear. They had silently marched round the moat, and had reached the place where the

huge tree, detached from its base, had fallen across and served both as a flying-bridge and a scaling-ladder to the champions of the young actress.

The worthy Herod had of course offered his assistance to Sigognac, whom he esteemed highly, and whom he would have followed into the very mouth of hell, even if it had not been a case of rescuing the well beloved Isabella, who had endeared herself to the whole company, and whom he was particularly fond of. It was not due to cowardice that he had not yet figured in the thick of the fight, for, actor as he was, he was as brave as a soldier. He had bestridden the tree, like the others, lifting himself along with his hands, and progressing in jerks, at the expense of the seat of his trunks, which was suffering from the roughness of the bark. Ahead of him moved, as quickly as he could, the doorkeeper of the company, a resolute fellow accustomed to use his fists, and to resist the onset of the crowd. When the doorkeeper reached the point where the branches forked, he laid hold of a strong one and continued on his upward way, but when Herod, who was stout as Goliath, reached the top of the trunk, his weight, well suited to one who played the parts of tyrants, but not so well adapted for a stormer, caused

the bough to bend and crack under him in a most alarming manner. He looked down, and some thirty feet below, in the darkness, he caught sight of the sombre waters of the moat. This caused him to pause and to secure a position upon one of the more solid parts of the tree, capable of bearing his weight.

"By Jupiter!" said he to himself, "an elephant might just as well try to balance itself upon a spider's thread as I to trust myself to these twigs that would bend under a sparrow. That sort of thing is all very well for Scappinos, lovers, and other nimble people whose business requires that they should be thin. But as a tragedy-king and tyrant, fonder of wine than of women, I am not up to such acrobatic performances. If I endeavour to proceed farther in support of the Captain, who no doubt requires assistance, if I may judge by the firing of pistols and the clashing of swords, which indicate that matters are pretty warm up there, I shall assuredly take a header in that Stygian water, as thick and black as ink, green with viscous plants, swarming with toads and frogs, and I shall sink into the mud over head and ears, meeting with a most inglorious death, gaining a fetid tomb, and ending most wretchedly and profitlessly, for I

shall have accounted for not a single one of the enemy. There is no shame in drawing back; courage can do no good here. Even were I Achilles, Roland, or the Cid, I should none the less weigh two hundred and forty pounds and some odd ounces, and be sticking on a branch no thicker than my little finger. It is a question of statics, not of heroism. Therefore, right about face! I shall surely find some surreptitious mode of entering the fortress and aiding the worthy Baron, who just at this moment must be suspecting that my friendship is not worth much, — that is, supposing he has time to think of that or anything else."

This monologue ended, spoken as it was with the inner voice, so much faster than the physical, which worthy Homer nevertheless calls "winged," Herod turned abruptly right round on his wooden horse, that is, on the bole of the tree, and began to descend with great prudence. Suddenly he stopped. A faint sound of knees rubbing against the bark and of the hard breathing of a man struggling to climb, struck on his ear, and although the night was dark, and rendered still more so by the shadow of the castle, he fancied he could make out a dim form that stood out against the vertical line of the trunk. In order not to be seen,

he bent over and flattened himself out as much as his corporation would allow him to do. In that attitude he awaited the coming of the man, taking care to hold in his breath. In a couple of minutes he looked up, and seeing his foe close to him, drew himself up unexpectedly and showed his big face to the rascal, who had hoped to attack him in rear.

In order to have his hands free while climbing, Mérindol, who led the attack, had his knife between his teeth, so that in the darkness he looked as if he had a huge pair of mustaches. Herod seized him round the neck with his mighty hand, and squeezed his throat so hard that Mérindol, choking as if his head had been passed through the hangman's noose, opened his mouth to draw breath and let fall his knife, which plumped into the moat. But the pressure on his throat not diminishing, his knees gave way, his limp arms moved convulsively, and soon the sound of a heavy fall in the water made itself heard in the darkness, while the spray splashed up to Herod's feet.

"That 's one accounted for," said the Tyrant to himself. "If he be not choked to death, he is certainly drowned, and either result is gratifying. Now let me proceed on my perilous descent."

He made his way down a little farther. A small bluish spark was twinkling within a short distance of him, revealing the match of a pistol. The wheel-lock clicked sharply, a light flashed in the darkness, a shot was heard, and a bullet passed two or three inches above Herod's head; but the latter had crouched low the moment he had caught sight of the shining point, and had pulled his head well down between his ears like a turtle, and well it was for him that he did so.

"Confound the fellow," grumbled a voice, which was that of La Râpée; "I have missed him!"

"You have indeed, my lad," returned Herod, "and yet I am big enough. You must be a desperately poor shot; however, try to parry this."

Whereupon the Tyrant raised a cudgel fastened to his wrist with a leather thong; not a very aristocratic weapon, no doubt, but which he handled with remarkable dexterity, having for a long time, while on his rounds through the provinces, practised with the Rouen quarter-staff players. The cudgel struck the sword which the ruffian had drawn, after returning the useless pistol to his belt, and smashed it to flinders, so that La Râpée found himself with the stump of it merely in his hand. He was even hit on the shoulder

by the cudgel, and though the force of the blow was deadened, he received a slight contusion.

The two adversaries being now face to face — for the one insisted on trying to get down, and the other on getting up, — they clasped each other round the body and strove each to precipitate the other into the black, gaping abyss of the moat below. La Râpée was a very strong and skilful rascal, but he found it no easy matter to move the Tyrant's huge bulk; he might as well have tried to uproot a tower. Herod had wound his legs around the trunk of the tree, and held on as if he had grappling-irons out. La Râpée, squeezed by a pair of arms as muscular as those of Hercules, was perspiring and choking. Almost flattened out against the Tyrant's broad chest, he pressed out with his hands against the latter's shoulders, in order to free himself of his powerful grasp. By a clever feint, Herod relaxed his hold slightly, and the ruffian pulled himself up, drawing in at the same time a deep breath. Herod then, letting him go suddenly, caught him once more lower down, just on the hips, and lifting him up in the air, compelled him to leave his point of support. All the Tyrant now had to do to send La Râpée plunging through the lentil plants

on the moat, was to open his hands. He did so, and the ruffian fell. But being, as I have said, a quick and light fellow, he managed to clutch a bough, and hung on to the tree, his body swinging over the water, while he made desperate efforts to catch on to the trunk with his feet and his legs. He failed to do so, and hung pulled out like a capital "I," his arm horribly strained by the weight of his body. Determined not to let go, he drove his fingers into the bark, which they tore as if they had been steel talons, while the muscles stretched out on his hand, apparently near snapping, like the strings on a violin when they are strung up too taut. Had it been light, the blood would have been seen spurting from under his finger nails.

It was not a pleasant position. Hanging by a single hand, dreadfully strained by the weight of his whole body, La Râpée experienced, in addition to physical pain, the dread horror of falling, mingled with the strange attraction caused by his being suspended over a black gulf. His wide-open eyes stared at the sombre depth; his ears buzzed; his temples were lancinated as by arrows; he wanted to let himself drop, but forthwith the lively instinct of self-preservation held him

back. He could not swim, and therefore the moat meant death for him.

In spite of his grim look and coal-black eyebrows, Herod was at bottom a tender-hearted creature. He felt pity for the poor devil who had been swinging in empty air for some minutes, that to the wretch must have seemed as long as eternity, and whose agony was prolonged by atrocious suffering. Bending over the trunk, he said to La Râpée : —

" You rascal, if you swear by your life in the next world — for your life in this is in my hands — to remain neutral in the fight, I shall take you off the gibbet on which you are hanging like the wicked thief."

" I swear it," gasped La Râpée in a low voice, for his strength was done. " But for God's sake, be quick, for I cannot hold on."

Herod caught the rascal's arm with his mighty hand, and thanks to his amazing strength, pulled the fellow up on the tree, where he set him astride the trunk opposite him, handling him as easily as if he had been a rag doll.

La Râpée was no school miss subject to fainting, yet he was almost gone when the worthy actor drew

him into safety, and but for the strong grasp that held him, he would have tumbled off like an inert mass.

"I have not any salts to make you breathe, or any feathers to burn under your nose," said the Tyrant, as he rummaged in his pockets; "but here is a cordial that will set you up, for it is genuine Hendayes brandy, the very spirit of the sun."

Whereupon he applied the mouth of the bottle to the lips of the swooning ruffian.

"Come, drink down this milk. Two or three sips more, and you will be as lively as an unhooded hawk."

The strong drink quickly acted on the bravo, who thanked Herod with a gesture of the hand, and moved his numbed arm to restore the circulation.

"Now," said Herod, "let us waste no more time, and get down from this perch, on which I am far from being at my ease, to the blessed solid earth which better suits my corpulence. You go first," he added, turning La Râpée right round and setting him astride the tree.

La Râpée slid down the trunk and the Tyrant followed him. On reaching the bottom of the tree, the ruffian, still followed by Herod, perceived a group on watch at the edge of the moat. It was composed

of Agostino, Azolan, and Basque. "A friend!" he cried aloud, and turning round he whispered to the player: —

"Say not a word, and follow close at my heels."

As they landed on the ground La Râpée approached Azolan and gave the countersign, adding: —

"This man and I are wounded and are going to the rear for a moment to wash and dress our hurts."

Azolan nodded in assent, for the tale was a likely one, and La Râpée and the Tyrant therefore went quietly off. When they were fairly within the shelter of the wood, which, although the trees were leafless, was thick enough to conceal them, the darkness aiding, the ruffian said to Herod: —

"You generously granted me my life; in return I have just saved you from death, for those fellows would have knocked you on the head. I have paid my debt, but I consider myself still under obligation to you. If you should ever need me, you will find me ready. Now go about your business; I shall strike this way; do you travel in that direction."

Herod continued down the walk on finding himself alone, looking through the trees at the accursed castle into which he had, to his great regret, failed to penetrate.

Except on the side attacked there was not a light in any of the windows, the castle being buried in darkness and silence. But on the façade at right angle the rising moon was beginning to cast its beams, silvering the purple slates of the roof. The growing light enabled the Tyrant to see a sentry walking up and down upon a narrow esplanade on the bank of the moat. It was Labriche, watching the boat in which Mérindol, La Râpée, Azolan, and Agostino had crossed the moat.

The sight of the sentry made Herod reflect.

"What the devil is that man doing alone in that solitary place while his comrades are fighting? Probably, in order to prevent a surprise or to secure their retreat, he is placed there to guard a secret passage or a concealed postern, through which, after I have stunned him with a blow of my cudgel on his pate, I may manage to get into that confounded castle and prove to Sigognac that I have not forgotten him."

While thus ruminating, Herod, treading lightly and as noiselessly as if his shoes had been soled with felt, approached the sentry with the gentle and feline deliberation characteristic of stout men. As soon as he was within reach, he dealt him a blow on the head calculated to stun but not to kill him, for, as has been

seen, Herod was not naturally cruel and in no wise desired the death of a sinner.

As much taken by surprise as if a lightning bolt had come out of the blue, Labriche went down like a stone and remained motionless, the force of the blow having caused him to lose his senses. Herod then advanced to the parapet of the moat, and saw that from a narrow cut in the rail there ran down a diagonal set of steps, cut in the revetment wall, and leading to the bottom of the moat or, at least, to the level of the water that lipped the lower steps. The Tyrant descended cautiously, and stopped when he felt his feet wet. He endeavoured to pierce the obscurity ; ere long he made out the boat, hauled close up to the wall, and drew it to him by means of the chain painter fastened to the foot of the steps. It was an easy matter for him to break the chain, and he stepped into the boat, which his weight nearly caused to turn turtle. As soon as it had done rocking and had regained its equilibrium, Herod gently sculled with the single oar placed in the stern, and which served both to propel and to steer the craft. The boat, yielding to the impulse given it, soon shot out of the shadow into the lighted strip, the moonlight making the oily waters sparkle like the scales

of blay-fish. The pale beams of the moon enabled Herod to make out, in the substructure of the castle, a narrow stair under a vaulting of brick-work. He landed there, and by simply passing under the archway, reached without hindrance the inner court, which at this moment was completely deserted.

"I am right in the heart of the place," said Herod, rubbing his hands. "I feel a good deal braver upon these broad, well cemented stones than I did upon that parrot's perch from which I have climbed down. And now let me get my bearings, and join my comrades."

Observing the steps guarded by the two stone sphinxes, he wisely concluded that so fine an entrance must lead to the handsomest rooms in the building, where no doubt Vallombreuse had confined the young actress, and where must be fought out the battle on behalf of this virtuous Helen, unincumbered with a Menelaus. Nor did the sphinxes presume to forbid his passing.

The victory seemed to be with the assailants. Brinquenarilles, Tordgueule and Piedgris lay like cattle on the floor; Malartic, the leader of the band, had been disarmed. In point of fact, however, the victors were prisoners, for the door of the room, bolted outside,

stood between them and the object of their search. And the door, being constructed of thick oak adorned with elegant polished steel-work, might readily prove an insurmountable obstacle to people unprovided with axes and crowbars. Sigognac, Lampourde, and Scappino, putting their shoulders against it, were trying to burst it open, but it stood fast and resisted their united efforts.

"Let us burn it down," said Sigognac, who was desperate. "There are blazing logs on the fire."

"It would take a long time," replied Lampourde, "for oak is hard to burn. Let us rather lay hold of that coffer and use it as a catapult or battering-ram to burst in this most inopportune barrier."

No sooner was this said than it was done, and the handsome piece of furniture, wrought with delicate carvings, was roughly caught up and hurled against the solid door, with no better result than the spoiling of the polished surface and the breaking off the pretty head of an angel or a Cupid exquisitely carved upon one of the corners. The Baron was nearly crazy, for he knew that Vallombreuse had carried off the girl when he left the room, notwithstanding her desperate resistance.

Suddenly a tremendous row was heard. The branches obstructing the window disappeared, and the tree fell into the water in the moat with sounds of smashing mingled with the cries of a man, the cries of the doorkeeper, who had stopped on his way up, finding the branch was not stout enough for his weight. The brilliant idea of tumbling the tree into the water, in order to cut off the besiegers' retreat, had occurred to Azolan, Agostino, and Basque.

"If we do not succeed in breaking in the door," said Lampourde, "we shall be caught like rats in a trap. The devil take the workmen of old who wrought in such durable fashion. I shall try to cut the wood out round the lock with my dagger, and see if I can pick it off, since we cannot force it. We must get out of this at any cost, for we no longer have the chance of hanging on to our tree, like bears on their stump in the pits in Berne, in Switzerland."

He was just setting about the job, when the sound of a key turning in the lock became audible, and the door attacked in vain suddenly opened of itself.

"Who is the good angel," cried Sigognac, "who has thus come to our aid? And by what miracle does

the door yield so readily after having so stubbornly defied us?"

"There is neither angel nor miracle," answered Chiquita, issuing from behind the door, and looking at the Baron in her quiet, mysterious way.

"Where is Isabella?" cried Sigognac, glancing round the room dimly lighted by the faint light of a small lamp.

He did not at first see her. The Duke de Vallombreuse, startled by the sudden throwing open of the leaves of the door, was standing at bay in one corner, having placed the young actress behind him. The girl was half dead with terror and fatigue; she had sunk to the ground, her head resting against the wall, her hair undone and falling around her, her garments in disorder and the lacing of her bodice broken, so desperately had she fought her ravisher, who, feeling his prey escaping him, had in vain tried to snatch a few lascivious kisses, like a faun pursued as he is carrying a nymph into the forest.

"There she is," said Chiquita, "in the corner, behind my lord Vallombreuse. But if you want the girl, you will have to kill the man."

"That is a small matter," returned Sigognac, "and kill him I shall."

Whereupon he dashed at the young Duke sword in hand.

"We shall see about that, Master Captain Fracasse, knight-errant of gipsies," replied the Duke with great disdain.

The blades met and turned one around the other in the slow and prudent way which skilful swordsmen adopt in a deadly combat. Vallombreuse was no match for Sigognac, but, as became a man of his rank, he had long frequented fencing-schools, practised hard, and been taught by the best masters. Therefore he did not hold his sword like a broom-handle, to recall Lampourde's contemptuous description of unskilful fencers, who, in that worthy's opinion, cast discredit upon the art. Knowing how much his adversary was to be dreaded, the young Duke kept on the defensive, parried the thrusts, and did not attempt to return them. He hoped to tire out Sigognac, who must be already wearied by the share he had taken in the attack on the castle and by his bout with Malartic, the sounds of which had reached him through the door. But, while keeping the Baron's blade from his breast, he was feeling with his left hand for a small silver whistle hanging on a chain and concealed in the breast of his doublet.

On getting hold of it he put it to his lips, and blew a shrill and prolonged call, a performance that was within an ace of costing him his life; the Baron's sword nearly pinned his hand to his lips; but though the Duke's parry was a little tardy, it served to strike up the point, and he was merely cut on the thumb. Vallombreuse kept on guard again; his eyes flashed yellow glances like those of jettatori and basilisks, glances known to be deadly; a diabolically wicked smile played on his lips; he beamed with gratified ferocity, and without affording a single opening, he was advancing upon Sigognac, thrusting and lunging, though the Baron's parry was always ready.

Malartic, Lampourde, and Scappino were watching admiringly this most interesting fight, on which hung the fortunes of the day; for it was the leaders of the two parties who were engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle. Scappino had even fetched the candles from the other room in order that the rivals should have more light. It was a touching attention.

"The little Duke is not doing badly," said Lampourde, who was an impartial admirer of good work. "I should not have supposed that he could be so strong on the defensive; but if he lunges he is done for.

Captain Fracasse's arm is longer than his. Did n't I tell you ? There 's his opponent's sword flashing into the opening ! Vallombreuse is hit ! No ! he has fallen back in the nick of time."

At this moment the sound of clattering steps was heard approaching. A panel opened noisily and five or six armed lackeys dashed into the room.

" Carry off the girl," called Vallombreuse to them, " and charge these rascals. I shall account for the Captain."

And thereupon he charged the Baron.

Sigognac was startled by the irruption of the rabble ; his guard was less close, for he was following with his eyes Isabella, unconscious, borne away towards the stairs by a couple of lackeys whose retreat the Duke was protecting. The result of his inattention was that Vallombreuse's point scored his wrist. The scratch recalled him to a sense of the situation, and he lunged straight out at the Duke, driving his sword through his body just below the collar bone, to such good purpose that the Duke staggered backwards.

In the meantime Lampourde and Scappino were handling the lackeys in rare fashion ; the former was sticking them with his long rapier as though they had

been so many rats, and Scappino hammering them over the head with the butt of a pistol he had picked up. On seeing their master wounded, leaning against the wall and supporting himself on the hilt of his sword, his face pale as death, the wretched rabble, utterly cowardly, gave up the fight and made a bolt of it. It is true that Vallombreuse had not gained the affection of his servants, whom he treated as a tyrant rather than as a master would, and towards whom he exhibited the most astounding ferocity.

"Here, you rascals! Help!" he moaned in a faint voice. "Are you going to leave me without aid or succour?"

While this was going on, Herod, as I have said, was tripping, as lightly as his weight allowed him, up the great staircase, which, since Vallombreuse had arrived, was lighted with a handsomely wrought lantern hanging from a silken cord. He reached the first-floor landing at the very moment when the lackeys were bearing away Isabella, dishevelled, pale, motionless, and apparently dead. He jumped to the conclusion that the young Duke had killed her, or caused her to be killed, out of revenge for her determined resistance, and his wrath being kindled by the thought, he fell upon the

fellows with his sword. The men, taken aback by this unexpected attack, against which they were powerless, their hands being full at the time, dropped their victim and fled as if the devil were hotfoot after them. Herod stooped and raised Isabella, placed her head upon his knee, and laid his hand on her heart to ascertain whether she still lived. He was reassured to find that she was apparently unwounded and was beginning to breathe faintly like one who is regaining consciousness.

Sigognac, having disposed of Vallombreuse by using against him the terrific thrust Lampourde so greatly admired, shortly came upon him in this attitude. The Baron knelt by Isabella, took hold of her hands, and said to her, in a voice which she heard distantly as in a dream:—

"Recover yourself, dear one, and fear nothing. You are with your friends, and no one now can harm you."

Although as yet unable to open her eyes, a faint smile played upon Isabella's lips, from which the colour had fled, and her fingers, clammy with the cold sweat of the swoon, gently pressed Sigognac's hand. Lampourde, who claimed to be an expert in affairs of the heart, watched the group with moistened glance.

Suddenly an imperious blast of horns was heard in the silence which had succeeded to the tumult of battle. A few minutes later it was repeated with strident and prolonged angry accent. It was the call of a master who must be obeyed. The clanking of chains was heard; a low rumble indicated that the drawbridge was being lowered; there was a rattling of wheels under the archway; the windows of the staircase blazed instantaneously with the red glow of torches in the courtyard; the great entrance-door opened noisily, and hasty steps were heard ascending the stairs.

Presently appeared four lackeys in state liveries, carrying lighted candles with the impassible air and the mute swiftness characteristic of the retainers of a great establishment. Behind them came a gentleman of proud mien, dressed from head to foot in black velvet quilled with jet. The star of an order of knighthood to which kings and princes and a few personages of the most illustrious alone belong, glittered upon his breast. On reaching the landing the lackeys drew up against the wall, like statues bearing candelabra in their hands, without the slightest motion of the muscles of their faces indicating that they were in the least conscious of the startling scene being enacted before them.

Their master not having yet spoken, it was not their business to express any opinion.

The nobleman stopped on the landing. Although age had wrinkled his brow and his face, yellowed his complexion, and whitened his hair, it was still easy to recognise in him the original of the portrait which had attracted Isabella's attention in her distress, and to which she had turned supplicatingly as to a friendly face. It was the Prince, Vallombreuse's father; the son bearing the title of a duchy until such time as the natural course of events should make him the head of the house in his turn.

At the sight of Isabella, supported by Herod and Sigognac, and whose pallor gave her the look of one dead, the Prince raised his hands to heaven and said with a sigh: —

"I have arrived too late, in spite of all my efforts."

Then he bent down over the young actress and took her hand. On that hand, white as if carved in alabaster, sparkled on the third finger a ring, in which was set a large amethyst. The old nobleman appeared strangely moved at the sight of the ring and drew it tremblingly from Isabella's finger. He signed to one of the lackeys to draw nearer, and by the light of the

candle he examined the coat of arms engraved upon the stone, now putting it close to the light and now holding it at a little distance in order the better to note its every detail with his failing sight.

Sigognac, Herod, and Lampourde anxiously watched the Prince's strange actions and marked the changes of expression on his face as he examined the gem with which he appeared to be so familiar, and which he kept turning over and over as if unable to reconcile himself to some painful conclusion.

At last he shouted in a voice of thunder : —

" Where is Vallombreuse ? Where is that monster, the shame of my house ? "

He had, beyond peradventure, recognised the ring as being the one on which was engraved a fancy shield used by him in former days to seal the notes he was in the habit of writing to Cornelia, Isabella's mother. How did this ring happen to be worn by the young actress abducted by Vallombreuse, and how had it come into her possession ?

" Could she possibly be Cornelia's daughter, — and my own daughter therefore ? " the Prince asked himself anxiously. " The profession of actress she follows, her age, her face, in which I can recognise her

mother's lineaments softened by youth, everything combines to make me believe it must be so. Then it was his own sister whom that foul libertine was pursuing! His love was incestuous! This is indeed cruel punishment for a sin of long ago!"

At last Isabella opened her eyes, and the first object she beheld was the Prince holding the ring he had removed from her finger. The face seemed familiar to her, but she recollected it youthful, and without gray hair or beard. At the sight of him she felt her heart filled with deepest veneration. She saw also at her side brave Sigognac and kind Herod, both safe and sound, and the feeling of safety dispelled her terrors. She need fear no more either for her friends or herself. Partially sitting up, she bowed to the Prince, who was watching her with intense attention and seemed to look in the features of the young girl for the remembrance of a once loved face.

"From whom," said he to her, in a voice filled with emotion, "did you receive this ring? It recalls certain remembrances to me. Have you long had it?"

"I have had it since my earliest childhood," answered Isabella. "It is the one and only thing of my mother's that is left to me."

"Who was your mother? And what was her profession?" went on the Prince with increased interest.

"She was called Cornelia," replied Isabella shyly, "and she was merely a strolling player who took the parts of queens and princesses in tragedy in this very company of which I form part."

"Cornelia!" exclaimed the Prince, deeply moved. "There can be no doubt that I am right."

Then, mastering his feelings, he resumed his majestic and calm look, and said to Isabella: —

"Allow me to retain this ring; I shall give it back to you at the proper time."

"It could not be better than in your lordship's hands," replied the young actress, recalling, amid the dim and distant remembrances of her childhood, a face that she had seen bending over her cradle.

"Gentlemen," said the Prince, fixing his clear, firm glance upon Sigognac and his companions, "under any other circumstances I might well wonder at finding you here with arms in your hands; but I am acquainted with the reason that has led you to invade a home until now held sacred. Violence invites and justifies violence. I shall forget what has happened.

But where is the Duke de Vallombreuse, the degenerate son who dishonours my gray hairs?"

As if answering his father's call, Vallombreuse appeared at that very moment upon the threshold of the room, supported by Malartic. He was ghastly pale, and nervously pressed a handkerchief to his breast. It was true that he was walking, but as spectres walk, without raising his feet from the ground; it was only his tremendous will, the exercise of which imparted a marble-like rigidity to his features, that enabled him to keep up. He had heard his father's voice, and depraved though he was, he still feared his sire, and hoped to succeed in concealing his wound from him. He was biting his lips to keep back his groans, and swallowed the bloody froth that rose to his lips. He even managed to take off his hat, in spite of the atrocious pain caused by the raising of his arm, and he remained thus bare-headed and silent.

"Sir," said the Prince, "your excesses have gone beyond all bounds, and your conduct has become such that I shall be compelled to request the King to grant me the favour of exiling you or imprisoning you for life. Abduction, sequestration, and rape are not comprised under the designation of love-making; and while

I may make allowance for the wildness of a licentious youth, I can never pardon a coolly planned crime. Do you know, you monster," added the Prince, approaching Vallombreuse and speaking in his ear so as to be inaudible to every one else, " do you know who the girl, the Isabella whom you abducted in spite of her virtuous resistance, is ? — your sister ! "

" May she, then, take the place of the son whom you are about to lose," replied Vallombreuse, overcome by faintness, and his face wet with the death-sweat. " I am not, however, as guilty as you think. Isabella is pure; I swear it by the God before whom I am about to appear. A man does not lie when at death's door, and you may trust the word of a dying nobleman."

These words he spoke loud enough to be heard by every one present. Isabella turned her lovely, tear-wet eyes to Sigognac, and read on that true lover's face that he had not waited for Vallombreuse's dying declaration to believe in the virtue of the woman he adored.

" Why, what is the matter with you ? " said the Prince, holding out his hand to the young Duke, who, notwithstanding that he was supported by Malartic, was sinking to the ground.

"Nothing, father," replied Vallombreuse, in a scarcely audible voice. "Nothing — I am dying."

And with the words he fell in a heap upon the stone flagging without Malartic being able to prevent him.

"He has not fallen on his nose," said Lampourde, quietly. "He has merely fainted and he may pull through. We swordsmen know a good deal more about such matters than apothecaries and leeches."

"A physician! a physician!" cried the Prince, forgetting his anger at the sight of the young fellow on the floor. "There may be hope yet. I will make the fortune of the man who saves my son, the last of a noble house. Away with you! What are you standing about for? Off with you! Run!"

Two of the lackeys who had watched the scene, impassible and without moving a muscle, stepped forward from the wall and hastened to carry out their lord's orders.

Other servants, taking every possible precaution, lifted Vallombreuse and, by direction of the Prince, carried him to his room, where they laid him on his bed.

The old gentleman followed the pitiful procession with a glance in which grief already overcame wrath. He saw his family ending in that son whom he loved

and abhorred at one and the same time, but whose vices he forgot just then in favour of his brilliant qualities. Deep gloom filled his soul, and he remained for a time sunk in a silence which all around respected.

Isabella, having entirely recovered from her fainting fit, was standing with downcast eyes by Sigognac and Herod, endeavouring to repair the disorder of her dress. Lampourde and Scappino, somewhat in the background, effaced themselves like figures of secondary importance, while through the open door were to be seen the ruffians who had taken part in the fight, and who were somewhat doubtful of the fate that awaited them, dreading to be sent to the galleys or the gibbet in return for the help they had given Vallombreuse in his criminal enterprise.

At last the Prince broke the silence that had become painful, and said: —

"Leave the castle at once, every one of you who have put your swords at the service of my son's evil passions. My rank forbids my undertaking the duties of the police and the executioner. Away with you; vanish; return to your dens, where justice will have no difficulty in finding you."

The form of dismissal was not very gracious, but it

would have been ill-timed to exhibit any great susceptibility. The ruffians, whom Lampourde had relieved of their bonds at the outset of the scene, stood not upon the order of their going, but made off speedily, with Malartic in the lead.

When they had withdrawn, Vallombreuse's father took Isabella by the hand, drew her away from her companions, placed her close by himself, and said: —

"Remain there, Miss; your place is henceforth by my side. The least you can do is to restore a daughter to me, since you deprive me of a son."

And he wiped away a tear that in spite of himself had begun to trickle down his cheek.

Then turning towards Sigognac with a superbly noble gesture, —

"Sir," he said, "you and your companions may withdraw. Isabella has nothing to fear by her father's side, and this castle will be her home henceforth. Now that her birth has become known, it is not seemly that my daughter should return to Paris. I have paid dearly enough for her to have the right to keep her. I thank you, even though it costs me the hope of seeing my line continued, for having prevented my son committing a shameful deed, nay, an abominable crime. I

would rather have my shield stained with blood than soiled with filth. Vallombreuse having made himself infamous, you were in the right in slaying him. You acted like a true nobleman, and I am told that you are one, in protecting helplessness, innocence, and virtue. You had the right to do so, and my daughter's honour made safe by you compensates for the death of my son. I feel all this, yet the father's heart rebels, and it may be that unjust desire of vengeance may assail and overmaster me. Pray go; I shall not pursue you, and I shall do my best to forget that you were compelled to use your sword against my son."

"My lord," answered Sigognac, in a tone of deepest respect. "I make such large allowance for a father's grief that I would have listened in silence to the bitterest, to the most stinging remarks, although I feel that in this disastrous conflict I have nothing to reproach myself with. I do not wish to say aught that might be construed into an accusation against the unfortunate Duke de Vallombreuse, even for the purpose of setting myself right in your eyes. But I do pray you to believe that I did not seek him out; that he himself purposely traversed my path; that on more than one occasion I

have done my utmost to spare him. In this very meeting, it was his own blind fury that made him rush upon my sword-point. I leave Isabella in your hands; she is dearer to me than life itself; and I withdraw filled with woe at the painful victory I have won, and which proves in truth to be a defeat, since it wrecks my happiness. Would I had been the victim, the one slain, rather than the murderer!"

Sigognac bowed to the Prince, and casting upon Isabella a long glance filled with love and regret, he descended the stairs, followed by Lampourde and Scappino. He looked round more than once, and thus it was he saw the girl leaning against the rail to keep from fainting, and pressing to her eyes her tear-wet handkerchief. Was it her brother's death or Sigognac's departure that was the cause of her woe? For myself, I opine that it was the latter, for the aversion Vallombreuse had inspired in her was yet too recent to have changed into affection on suddenly learning of their relationship to each other. The Baron, at least, diffident though he was, came to the same conclusion, and, so strange is the human heart, the tears of the woman he loved proved a consolation to him as he went away.

The Baron and his companions left the castle by the

drawbridge, and while they were proceeding along the moat, on their way to get their horses in the little wood where they had left them, they heard a plaintive voice issuing from the moat at the very place where the great tree had fallen. It was the doorkeeper of the company, who had been unable to extricate himself from the network of branches, and who was piteously calling for help. His head alone was above water, and he ran the risk, every time he opened his mouth to implore assistance, of swallowing the tasteless stuff which he hated more than poison. Scappino, very light and quick, ventured upon the tree and speedily fished out the doorkeeper dripping wet and covered with water-plants.

The horses had not moved away from their covert, and their riders having sprung into their saddles, they trotted gaily towards Paris.

"What think you, Sir Baron, of all these events?" said Herod to Sigognac, who was riding by his side. "The whole business has ended like a tragi-comedy. No one could have foreseen the arrival, in the very worst of the row, of a noble father preceded by torch-bearers, coming to put a stop to his son's outrageous pranks. Then look at the recognition of Isabella by

means of a ring with a coat of arms engraved upon it. Just the sort of thing we have seen on the stage; and after all, as it is the business of the stage to hold the mirror up to nature, it is only right and proper that real life should be like stage life. It has always been understood in the company that Isabella was of noble birth, and Blazius and Leonardo, indeed, remembered seeing the Prince, then a Duke only, at the time when he paid court to Cornelia. Leonardo more than once advised the girl to seek her father out, but Isabella, being shy and reserved, did not do so; she was satisfied with her humble condition, and not desirous of pushing herself into a family that might have disowned her."

"I was aware of these facts," answered Sigognac. "Although she attached no importance to her illustrious origin, Isabella had told me the story of her mother and spoken of the ring. Besides, it was easy to judge from her refinement of feeling that she had noble blood in her veins. I should have guessed at the fact, even had she not told me of it; her chaste, refined, delicate beauty testified to her high breeding. Consequently, and in spite of the fact that one is apt to be rather free in making love to actresses, my love for her was always

mingled with timidity and respect. But how cursedly unlucky it is that Vallombreuse should turn out to be her own brother! Now his dead body separates us; and yet the only way to save her honour was to slay him. I am a most unfortunate wretch, for I have myself created the obstacle that wrecks my love, and the sword that defended my darling has destroyed my hope. In order to save her whom I adore I have put her away from me for ever. How could I present myself with blood-imbrued hands to Isabella in mourning? It is true that the blood I have shed was shed in her defence, yet it is her brother's. Even if she were to pardon me and to look upon me without horror, the Prince, who has the rights of a father over her, would repel his son's murderer with a curse. I was born under a most unlucky star!"

"The whole business is indeed most painful," returned Herod; "yet the Cid and Ximena were in far worse condition, as may be seen in the play by Master Pierre de Corneille. Nevertheless, after many a long struggle between love and duty, matters were satisfactorily arranged, not without somewhat forced antitheses and conceits after the Spanish mode, which are effective on the stage. Vallombreuse is but a half-

brother of Isabella's, after all. They were not born of the same mother, and they met as relatives for but a very few minutes, a circumstance calculated to diminish resentment very greatly. Further, the young lady had the deepest abhorrence of that mad gentleman, who pursued her with his violent and scandalous attentions. The Prince himself was not greatly pleased with his son, who was cruel as Nero, dissolute as Heliogabalus, and perverse as Satan. But for his being a duke, he would have been hanged twenty times over. Don't you give way to despair. Matters may turn out more happily than you have any idea of."

"Heaven grant it, my kind Herod," said Sigognac. "But I am naturally unlucky; evil fairies and ill fortune presided over my birth. It would really have been better for me to have been killed, since her father's arrival made Isabella safe without involving Vallombreuse's death. And I may as well tell you the whole truth. When I saw that handsome young fellow, so full of life, fire, and passion fall straight, stiff, cold, and wan at my feet, I felt the icy chill of secret horror strike to my very marrow. It is an awful thing to have slain a man, Herod; and although I have no remorse, since I have committed no crime, I cannot

help seeing Vallombreuse stretched out, his hair lying loose upon the step, and a red stain on his breast."

"That is all nonsense," said Herod. "You slew him according to rule, and your conscience may rest in peace. A good gallop will dispel all these scruples, due to a touch of fever and the chill of night. The one thing we have to set about without loss of time is leaving Paris, for the death of Vallombreuse will make talk both at Court and in town, however carefully it may be attempted to conceal it; and little loved though he was, you might still be involved in trouble on his account. Now, then, a truce to talk; let us spur up our animals and get over the strip of road that stretches out before us in the moonlight, gray and monotonous, between the two rows of broomsticks."

The horses, duly urged with the heel, pushed on faster; but while they are proceeding onwards, let us return to the castle, now as quiet as it had shortly before been noisy, and enter the room where the servants had laid Vallombreuse upon his bed. It was lighted by a candelabrum placed upon a small table; the rays fell upon the bed, where lay the young Duke, motionless as if dead, and paler by contrast with the crimson hue of the curtains and the red reflections of

the silk. The walls were pannelled breast-high with ebony, inlaid with brass, forming a skirting for a costly tapestry representing the story of Medea and Jason, and filled with all manner of murders and sinister incidents. In one place Medea was seen cutting Peleas in pieces, under pretext of renewing his youth as Æson's had been. In another, a jealous wife and an unnatural mother, she was slaying her own children, and on still another panel, she was shown flying away, intoxicated with vengeance, upon a car drawn by dragons belching forth fire. The tapestry was undoubtedly beautiful, costly, and wrought by a cunning hand; but the fierce mythology it retraced had a grim and cruel aspect that betrayed a naturally ferocious disposition in the man who had selected it. At the back of the bed, the curtains being drawn aside, was seen Jason fighting the monstrous brazen bulls, guardians of the Golden Fleece; and Vallombreuse, lying senseless beneath, looked like one of their victims.

Garments most elegant and sumptuous, which had been tried on and then thrown aside, were scattered upon the chairs. In a tall Japanese vase, covered with designs in blue and red, standing upon a table of ebony, — the wood used for all the furniture in the room, —

was placed a splendid bouquet, composed of the finest flowers and intended to take the place of the one Isabella had refused. It had failed to reach its destination, however, on account of the unexpected attack upon the castle. The superb flowers in full bloom, a yet fresh token of amorous passion, contrasted strangely with the motionless body, and a moralist would have found matter enough in the fact for endless talk.

The Prince, seated in an arm-chair by the bed, was gazing with mournful look upon the face, white as the lace pillow that swelled up around it. The very pallor caused the features to show more delicate and refined. The grosser touch life stamps upon a human face had disappeared in marmorean serenity, and never had Vallombreuse been handsomer than at this moment. His lips, no longer rosy but purple, seemed to give passage to not the faintest breath. As he gazed upon the fair form so soon to be reduced to dust, the Prince forgot that a devil's soul had but just left it, and he thought sadly of the illustrious name which had come down honoured through the ages, but which would not go down to future generations. It was not the death of his son alone that he mourned; it was the extinction of his line, a grief spared to the bourgeois

and to the lowly. He held the young man's ice-cold hand in his own, and feeling some warmth in it, did not recollect that he was himself the source of it, and he indulged all the more fondly in his vain hope.

At the foot of the bed stood Isabella, her hands clasped, and praying with all the strength of her being for the brother of whose death she was the innocent cause, and who was paying with his life for having loved not wisely but too well; a crime readily forgiven by women, especially when they themselves are the cause of it.

"And no physician yet!" said the Prince impatiently. "There might still be a chance."

Even as he spoke the words, the door opened and the surgeon, accompanied by a pupil carrying his case of instruments, entered. He bowed slightly, and without a word went straight to the bed whereon the young Duke lay, felt his pulse, put his hand on the heart, and seemed discouraged. Nevertheless, in order to make scientifically sure of his diagnosis, he drew from his pocket a small mirror of burnished steel, placed it in front of Vallombreuse's lips, and carefully examined the surface. It was faintly dimmed. Surprised, the

physician repeated the experiment, and again the steel was dimmed. Isabella and the Prince watched anxiously the motions of the surgeon, whose face had lost its look of discouragement.

"Life is not quite extinct," said he at last, as he turned towards the Prince, and repolished his mirror. "The Duke is still breathing, and as long as death has not laid its hand upon the patient, we have a right to hope. Do not, however, indulge in premature rejoicing, for your grief would be but the deeper. The Duke de Vallombreuse has not drawn his last breath; that is the most I can say; but it is a long way from that to restoring him to health. Now I shall examine the wound, which possibly is not mortal, since he was not slain upon the spot."

"Do not remain, Isabella," said the Prince. "The sight is too gruesome and trying for a girl. You shall be told what the doctor says, once his examination is concluded."

The young lady withdrew, preceded by a lackey who showed her to another apartment, the room she had occupied being in a state of great disorder and the furniture damaged in the fight that had taken place.

With the assistance of his pupil the leech undid Vallombreuse's doublet, cut the shirt open, and laid bare the breast, white as ivory, on which showed a small triangular wound and a few drops of blood. The bleeding had been slight and internal rather than external. The physician parted the lips of the wound and sounded it. The features of the patient contracted slightly, but his eyes remained shut, and he lay motionless as a statue on a tombstone in a family vault.

"That is a good sign," said the leech, noting the contraction due to pain. "He feels, therefore he lives, and the sensitiveness is a good omen."

"He will live, will he not?" said the Prince. "If you save him, I shall make you a rich man; I shall gratify your every wish; you shall have whatever you choose to ask."

"There is plenty of time for that," returned the physician. "So far, I cannot promise anything; the sword has pierced the upper part of the right lung, and the case is serious, exceedingly serious. On the other hand, as your son is young, healthy, robust, and endowed with a constitution that but for this unhappy wound might warrant him a century of life, it is possible that he will pull through, unless unforeseen

complications set in. There have been instances of recovery under similar circumstances; for nature has a good chance with young fellows, and the sap of life still ascending has many a way of making up for losses and repairing damage. I shall now try to free the chest of the blood which has spread internally, and which would end by suffocating the Duke, had he not fortunately fallen into the hands of a scientific man, not frequently to be met with in châteaux and villages at a distance from Paris. I shall make use of blisters and cuts. Come, fellow," he went on, speaking to his pupil, "Instead of glaring at me with those goggle eyes of yours, roll up the strips and fold compresses, so that I may dress the wound."

The operation over, the surgeon said to the Prince:

"I beg you will order a camp-bed to be set up in a corner of the room and some food to be brought, for my pupil and I will have to watch the Duke in turns. It is necessary for me to be on the spot, to note every symptom, to check it if it be unfavourable, and to aid it if it be the reverse. You may trust me, my lord, and you may rest assured that whatever human science can do to save life, will be done boldly yet prudently. I beg you will withdraw to your apart-

ments. I answer for your son's life — at least until the morning."

Somewhat reassured by the surgeon's words, the Prince retired to his room, where a lackey brought him every hour bulletins stating the young Duke's condition.

In the new room assigned her, Isabella found the same maid awaiting her to help her to undress who had waited upon her previously in such grim and repellent fashion. Now, however, the expression of the girl's face had completely changed; her eyes shone with strange glitter, and her face was radiant with gratified hatred. The mute spectre had been changed into a living woman, for an unspoken outrage, borne with silently, with the concentrated rage of powerlessness, had at last been avenged. She brushed Isabella's lovely hair with ill-disguised delight, put her night-dress on her with complacency, knelt down to take off her shoes and stockings, and was as caressing now as she had been rough before. Her lips, so firmly closed on the previous occasion, uttered endless questions, but Isabella, preoccupied and engrossed by the rush of events that had filled the evening, paid little heed to her, and did not note the contracted brows and the angry look of the girl when a lackey entered with the news that the

Duke's life was not wholly despaired of. On hearing this, the joy faded from her sombre features, that had lighted up for a moment, and she relapsed into her gloomy ways until her mistress dismissed her with a kindly gesture.

As she lay in her comfortable bed, a fit altar to Morpheus, but that failed nevertheless to bring her sleep at once, Isabella sought to clear up her own feelings with regard to the sudden change in her fortunes. But yesterday she had been a poor actress, known only under the stage name printed on the posters at the street corners. Now she was acknowledged by a great lord as his daughter, and she, the lowly bloom, was grafted on one of the boughs of that mighty genealogical tree the roots of which plunged so deep into the past and every branch of which bore some famous man or some hero. A venerable Prince, second only to crowned heads, was her father. The terrible Duke de Vallombreuse, so handsome in spite of his perversity, was changed from a lover into a brother, and no doubt, if he survived his wound, his passion would melt into pure and tranquil fraternal love. The castle, but recently her prison, was transformed into her home; she was in her own residence, and the servants obeyed her with

a respect in which there was no longer any trace of constraint or simulation. The wildest dreams of vaulting ambition had been fulfilled in her case without her having any share in the operation. The very circumstances that had appeared to threaten her destruction had combined to secure for her a wondrous, dazzling fortune of the most unexpected sort.

Isabella was not surprised to feel great joy fill her soul, so manifold was her happiness. She felt the need of getting used to the new order of things. It may be, too, that she unconsciously regretted her stage life; but the one thought uppermost in her mind, was the thought of Sigognac. How would the change in her condition affect her position with respect to him? Would it draw them together, or separate her from that true, devoted, and courageous lover? When she was poor, she had refused his hand in order not to stand in the way of his fortune; now that she was rich, it would be a delight to offer him her own. The acknowledged daughter of a prince might well become Baroness de Sigognac. But the Baron had slain Vallombreuse, and they could not clasp hands across the tomb. Even if the young Duke should recover, he might feel lasting resentment on account of his wound,

even more on account of the defeat he had sustained; for he was more sensitive to a hurt to his pride than to his flesh. Then the Prince, also, might very well, kind and generous though he was, look askance at the man who had nearly robbed him of his son, or he might have other plans for Isabella. But in her own heart, the young girl swore to herself that she would remain true to the man who had loved her as an actress, and enter a convent rather than marry a Duke, a Count, or a Marquis, no matter whether the suitor were handsome as the angels and endowed with all the graces and qualities of a favourite of the good fairies.

Satisfied with this resolution, she was about to fall asleep, when a slight sound caused her to open her eyes. She perceived Chiquita, standing at the foot of her bed, gazing upon her in silent meditation.

"What do you want, little one?" said Isabella, in her sweetest tones. "Did you not go with the others? If you would like to stay with me, I shall gladly keep you, for you have done me good service."

"I love you dearly," replied Chiquita, "but I cannot remain with you as long as Agostino lives. On the Albacete blades are inscribed the words *Soy de un dueno*, which mean *I own but one master*, — noble words, well

fitted to the trusty steel. Yet I do want something. If you really think I have paid you for the pearl necklace, kiss me. No one has ever kissed me, and I think it must be so nice."

"With all my heart," said Isabella, catching the child's head in her hands and kissing her brown cheeks that flushed with the intensity of her satisfaction.

"And now good-bye," said Chiquita, recovering her usual coolness.

She was about to slip out noiselessly as she had entered, when she caught sight, upon the table, of the knife she had taught the young actress to use in the event of her requiring to do so by way of protecting herself against Vallombreuse, and she said to Isabella: —

"Give me back the knife; you do not need it any more."

Then she disappeared.

XVIII

A FAMILY PARTY

THE surgeon had answered for Vallombreuse's life until the morrow, and he fulfilled his promise; for when the first beams of day entered the room where the young Duke lay, they found him breathing still. The room itself was in disorder, and blood-stained bandages lay about the tables. The patient had opened his eyes, and his lack-lustre glance was filled with the dim terror of utter weakness. Amid the mists of his swoon the ghastly visage of death had looked out upon him, and at times his eyes, fixed upon a given point, appeared to behold a frightful object invisible to the others. In order to avoid the hallucination, he would close his eyelids, their long dark lashes making more evident the waxen pallor of his cheeks. He would resolutely keep them shut, and the vision would then vanish. His face thereafter resumed a less terrified expression, and his gaze again wandered around. His soul was slowly returning

from the far confines, and the surgeon, his ear placed close to his breast, could perceive the heart beating again with feeble pulsations, faint tokens of life audible to the practised scientific ear only. The half-parted lips allowed the white teeth to show and seemed to smile vaguely, in a way that was sadder to behold than the expression of pain, for it was the smile that flits on human lips at the near approach of eternal sleep. There were, however, faintest rosy flushes amid the purple tones, that showed the blood was again beginning to course in the veins.

Standing by the wounded man's bedside, Master Laurent, the leech, was busy noting these symptoms, so difficult to seize upon, with close perspicacity and attention. He was a learned man, and it was only the lack of some important case that had hitherto prevented his becoming as famous as he deserved to be. Until this time he had had to practise chiefly *in animâ vili*, and had cured mainly people of low degree, townsmen, soldiers, clerks, attorneys, and other inferior members of the legal profession, whose death or recovery was of no importance whatever. He therefore attached enormous importance to saving the young Duke's life. His self-love and his ambition were equally interested in his

duel with death, and in order to retain for himself the whole praise and triumph, he had assured the Prince, who wished to send to Paris for the most famous practitioners, that he could undertake the cure unaided, and that there was nothing more dangerous in so serious a case as a change of treatment.

"No, indeed, he shall not die," said he to himself, as he examined the young Duke. "He has not the death-look on his face; his limbs are still supple, and he has passed successfully through the early morning period of anguish which strengthens sickness and induces a fatal crisis. Besides, he has got to live, for his recovery means fame and fortune to me. I shall snatch him from the hands of the old Terror, that handsome heir of a noble race! Sculptors shall have to wait long ere they are summoned to carve his monument, and he, in turn, shall enable me to leave this village where I am vegetating. Now let me try, first and foremost, even at the risk of bringing on fever, to restore his strength by the administration of an energetic cordial."

He opened his case of medicines himself, for his assistant, having sat up a part of the night, was sound asleep on the improvised camp-bed. He drew from it

a number of phials containing essences coloured in diverse shades, some red as rubies, others emerald green, others golden yellow, and others transparent as diamonds. Latin names, abridged, and looking to an uninitiated person like cabalistic formulæ, were pasted upon the glass of the phials. Although Master Laurent was quite confident of what he was doing, he read several times over the names of the phials he had set apart, looked at their contents in the light, turning to account for this purpose a sunbeam that filtered in through the curtains, weighed the quantity he took from each bottle in a silver measure the weight of which was known to him, and composed out of the various ingredients a potion in accordance with a recipe the secret of which he carefully guarded.

Having prepared his mixture, he awoke his assistant, and ordered him to raise Vallombreuse's head a little. He next forced apart, with a small spatula, the wounded man's teeth, and managed to introduce into his mouth the narrow neck of the phial. A few drops of the liquid trickled down the young Duke's palate, and the bitterness of the draught caused his motionless features to contract slightly. A little flowed down his throat, then a little more, presently more yet, and

finally the entire dose, to the doctor's great satisfaction, was swallowed without overmuch difficulty. As Vallombreuse drank, a faint flush began to colour his cheeks; he endeavoured to move his hand lying inert upon the sheet, sighed, and cast around him, like a person awaking from a dream, a look in which consciousness was visible.

"I played for heavy stakes," said Master Laurent to himself. "This medicine is a philter that kills or cures. This time it has cured, thanks be returned to Æsculapius, Hygeia, and Hippocrates."

At this moment the tapestry that formed the portière was gently drawn aside, and the Prince's venerable face, worn out and made older-looking by the anguish of the night than it would have been by ten years of life, showed under its folds.

"Well, Master Laurent?" he whispered in anxious tones.

The surgeon placed one finger on his lips, and with the other hand pointed to Vallombreuse, raised somewhat upon his pillow, and no longer cadaverous-looking, for the potion was burning him and reviving him.

Master Laurent, walking with the soft tread peculiar to persons in the habit of nursing the sick, came to the

Prince where the latter stood at the door, and drew him a little to one side.

"You see, my lord," said he, "that the Duke's condition, far from having become worse, has improved markedly. Of course he is not out of the wood yet, but unless an unexpected complication arises — and I am doing my best to avert that — I think he will pull through, and will be able to pursue his noble career as if nothing had happened."

The Prince's face lighted up with deep paternal emotion, but as he stepped into the room to embrace his son, Master Laurent respectfully laid his hand on his arm and stopped him : —

"Allow me, your Highness, to oppose your carrying out a most natural wish. Physicians are a nuisance at times, and the medical art is compelled oft to be cruel in order to be kind. I beseech you not to enter the Duke's room, for your presence, at once desired and feared, might bring on a dangerous turn. Any emotion at this time would be fatal to him, for it would snap the slight thread by which he clings to life. In a few days, when the wound has cicatrised and he has regained some strength, you shall freely enjoy the happiness of seeing him and speaking to him."

The Prince, reassured and recognising the soundness of the physician's contention, withdrew to his apartment, where he remained engaged in devotional reading until the hour of noon, when the majordomo appeared and informed him that "his lordship's dinner was on the table."

"Request my daughter, the Countess Isabella de Lineuil — that is the style and title by which she is henceforth to be addressed — to come down to dinner," said the Prince to the majordomo, who hastened to carry out the order.

Isabella traversed the antechamber in which stood the panoplies, the cause of her nocturnal terror, but she did not think it at all gloomy in the broad daylight, which came in by the tall windows, the shutters having been thrown open. The room had been aired, and a great blaze of juniper and other odorous woods, burning in the fireplace, had dispelled the close and mouldy smell of the place. The master's presence had restored life to the old hall.

The dining-room also was utterly changed, and the table that the night before seemed laid for a spectral meal was now covered with a rich tablecloth, the folds thereon forming symmetrical squares, and it looked

uncommonly well, laden as it was with old silver plate richly chased and engraved with coats of arms, with Bohemian glass flagons diapered with gold, spiral-stemmed Venetian glasses, spice-boxes, and dishes from which arose the most delightful odours.

Huge logs placed on the andirons, formed of superimposed polished metal balls, blazed up the great back-plate, emblazoned with the Prince's arms, in mighty whirls of flame that mingled with merry crackling of sparks, and cast a pleasant warmth throughout the vast hall. The plate on the dressers, the gilt and silver on the Cordova leather hangings, flashed and sparkled ruddy in the light of the fire in spite of the light of day.

When Isabella entered, the Prince was already in his chair, the high back of which was finished in the form of a dais. Behind him stood two lackeys in full livery. The young lady curtsied modestly to her father in a way that did not in the least smack of the stage, and that would have been commended by any high-born lady. A servant placed a chair for her, and she sat down opposite the Prince, at the place he pointed out, without exhibiting any particular embarrassment.

The soup having been served, the equerry-carver carved on a side table the dishes brought from the table by an officer of the pantry, and the valets then took them back ready for the guests.

One of the servants helped Isabella to wine, which she drank only largely diluted with water, like the sober and self-restrained person she was. But still feeling the effect of the excitement of the previous day and night, dazzled and disturbed by the sudden change in her fortunes, anxious about her brother lying grievously wounded, and perturbed concerning Sigognac's fate, she merely trifled with the dishes placed before her.

"You are neither eating nor drinking, Countess," said the Prince. "Will you not try this chicken-wing?"

On hearing herself called Countess in a tone at once friendly and serious, Isabella turned upon the Prince her beautiful blue eyes, with a glance of shy wonder and interrogation.

"Yes, Countess de Lineuil; it is the name of an estate which I bestow upon you, for charming though the name of Isabella be, it cannot be borne by my daughter by itself."

Isabella, yielding to an irresistible movement of her heart, rose, passed to the other end of the table, and kneeling by the Prince's side, took his hand and kissed it in acknowledgment of his delicate attention.

"Rise, my daughter," said the Prince, with emotion, "and resume your seat; I am doing no more than is right. Fate alone has prevented my doing it earlier, and the terrible circumstances which have brought us all together seem to have been divinely ordered. Your virtue prevented the committing of a great crime, and I love you for your action, even if it cost me my son's life. But surely God will spare him, so that he may repent of having outraged truest innocence. Master Laurent holds out hopes, and so far as I could observe from the threshold of the room, whence I could see Vallombreuse in his bed, he did not appear to me to have on his face the death-look which we old warriors recognise so readily."

A magnificent silver ewer was passed round for the diners to wash their hands, and the Prince, throwing down his serviette, went to the drawing-room, to which Isabella followed him in obedience to a sign from him. The aged nobleman sat down by the mantelpiece, a carved monumental pile that rose to the very ceiling,

and his daughter sat by him on a faldstool. The servants having withdrawn, the Prince tenderly took her hands in his, and remained for some time looking closely at the daughter he had recovered in so strange a fashion. His expression was one of mingled joy and sadness, for, notwithstanding the reassuring report of the medico, Vallombreuse's life still hung on a thread. He had reason to be happy, but he had also reason to dread. Soon, however, Isabella's lovely face dispelled his painful thoughts, and the Prince addressed himself in the following terms to the new Countess : —

" I have no doubt, my dear child, that in the course of the events which have reunited us in so strange, romantic, and supernatural a manner, it must have occurred to you that I made no effort to find you during the time which has elapsed since your childhood until now, and that it is merely a chance meeting that has brought together the lost child and the forgetful father. But that would be doing me an injustice, and your disposition is so kindly that you must have quickly put away that thought. As you are aware, your mother Cornelia was a woman of proud and arrogant spirit. She displayed in everything extraordinary violence, and when most important reasons, I may say reasons of

State, compelled me to part from her, very much against my will, in order to contract a marriage in obedience to a last wish, the equivalent of an order that is not to be resisted, she obstinately rejected, carried away by anger and disappointment, every proposal to secure her comfort and your future. She returned to me with insulting disdain estates, mansions, bonds, money, and jewels. Her disinterestedness, which I greatly admired, was matched by my resolution, and I placed in the hands of a person I could trust the moneys and bonds she had returned, so that they might be at her disposal in the event of her changing her mind. But she persisted in her refusal, changed her name, and joined another company, with which she travelled through the provinces, avoiding Paris and the places where I happened to be. I soon lost all trace of her, for the King, my master, appointed me to embassies and other difficult missions which kept me abroad for many years. On my return, I learned through agents at once intelligent and reliable, who had made it their business to question members of various theatrical companies and to induce them to talk, that Cornelia had died shortly before. As for the child, they had learned nothing of her and no one knew what

had become of her. The continual moving about of such companies, the stage names adopted by the actors who form part of them, and which they often change, either from necessity or from caprice, make it very difficult to carry on such inquiries by means of agents. A slight clue which would be enough for the person most interested is apt to appear valueless to an agent working for money only. I was told of more than one little girl in companies of this kind, but the circumstances of their birth did not correspond with those of your own. Indeed, mothers who cared little enough about keeping their children with them, suggested that their progeny was the child I was in search of, and I had to be on my guard against tricks of this sort. The moneys placed in trust for you had not been touched, and it was plain that Cornelia, nursing her wrath against me, had determined to avenge herself by keeping my daughter from me. I was forced to conclude that you were dead, but a secret instinct told me you were still alive. I remembered how pretty and sweet you used to look in your cradle, and how you used to pull at my mustache, which was black in those days, with your little rosy fingers whenever I bent down to kiss you. The birth of my son revived instead of deadening my

remembrance of you. I could not help thinking, as I watched him growing up in the midst of luxury, dressed out in lace and ribbons like a king's son, and playing with toys the price of which would have made many an honest family rich, that perhaps at that very moment, dressed in some worn-out theatrical rags, you were suffering from cold and hunger in a cart, or in a barn open to the four winds of heaven. 'If she is alive,' I would say to myself, 'I suppose some manager is ill-treating and beating her. Hanging from a brass wire and half dead from fright, she is filling the part of a Cupid or a genie in a scenic play. Her tears, scarce restrained, are furrowing the pearl powder with which her cheeks have been covered, or else, trembling with emotion, she is lisping in the smoky light of the candles the lines of a childish part that has already won for her many a box on the ears.' Then I would regret not having taken you from your mother on the very day of your birth; it is true that at the time I believed nothing would ever come between our love and us. Later on, I suffered in still another way. I thought of the innumerable attacks on your virtue to which, in the course of a wandering and unprotected life, you must be exposed, on account of your beauty, at the hands of

the libertines who turn to actresses as insects fly to the light; then I would flush with wrath at the idea that my blood, which flows in your veins, was exposed to such outrages. Many a time, affecting a liking for the drama I in no wise felt, I would go to the theatre and try to discover among the *ingénues* a girl of the age you would be and beautiful as I made sure you were. But I beheld rouged and powdered faces only, and the effrontery of courtesans under the affectation of innocence. Not one of these brazen hussies could possibly be you.

"I had, therefore, regretfully abandoned the hope of finding the daughter whose presence would have brightened my declining years. The Princess, my wife, who died three years after our marriage, had borne to me but one child, my son Vallombreuse, whose violent disposition caused me the greatest anxiety. A few days ago, being at Saint-Germain in attendance on His Majesty, in accordance with the duties of my office, I heard some of the courtiers singing the praises of Herod's troupe, and their account inspired me with the desire to witness for myself one of the performances of the company, said to be the best that had come from the provinces to Paris for a very long time past. Particular

praise was bestowed upon a certain Isabella, on account of her naturalness, her modesty, and her excellent and naïvely simple way of acting. It was also said that the part of a modest, innocent girl which she took on the stage, was that which she held to in private life, and the wickedest gossips had not a word to say against her character. Filled with a secret presentiment, I repaired to the hall where these players were performing, and I saw you play to the universal satisfaction of the audience. Your air of a well-bred young girl, your timid and modest ways, the fresh and silvery tones of your voice filled me with strange emotion. It is impossible for a father to recognise in the lovely young woman of twenty the child he has not seen since it was in its cradle, especially in the blaze of the footlights and in the dazzling illusion of the stage; yet it seemed to me that if Fate were to drive a girl of high birth to the stage, she would have precisely such a reserved and discreet mien, keeping the other players at a distance, a look of high breeding which would lead every one to say, 'How does that girl happen to be there?'

"In the same play figured a Pedant whose rubicund nose was not wholly unknown to me, and I remembered that it was he who used to play the parts of

Pantaloons and foolish old men in the company to which Cornelia belonged. I cannot explain why it was that in imagination I connected you with that pedant who had once been a fellow-actor of your mother's. It was in vain that my sober sense pointed out that the man might very well have joined the company without your being necessarily a member of it; it nevertheless seemed to me that he held in his hand the clue which would enable me to unravel the maze of mysterious events; I therefore resolved to question him, and would have done so but for the fact that when I sent to the inn in the Rue Dauphine I received word that the players of Herod's company had started to give a performance in a château near Paris. I should have quietly awaited the return of the actors, had not a worthy retainer of mine, who feared trouble, informed me that the Duke de Vallombreuse, madly in love with an actress called Isabella, who resisted all his advances with the utmost virtue, had planned to abduct her during the trip to the imaginary château, with the help of a gang of hired ruffians, — a deed that overstepped all bounds in its violence and which might have fatal results, for the young lady was accompanied by friends who went about armed.

"My suspicions of your real condition threw me, on the receipt of this information, into a most painful state of mind. I shuddered at the thought of a criminal love which was turning into a monstrous love, if my presentiments did not deceive me; for if I was right, you were Vallombreuse's own sister. I learned that the scoundrels were to fetch you to this castle, and I made all haste to repair hither. You had already been placed in safety; your honour was untouched, and the amethyst ring confirmed all that my own heart believed when I saw you."

"Believe me, my lord and father," returned Isabella, "I never reproached you in any way. Accustomed from my childhood to the life of a strolling player, I accepted my fate without a murmur, for I had never known any other condition and did not dream of ever doing so. The little I knew of the world sufficed to make me understand that I should be very ill-advised to claim recognition from an illustrious family, when grave reasons no doubt required that I should be left obscure and forgotten. The faint remembrance of my birth did at times fill me with pride, and I would say to myself, on observing the haughty manner in which great ladies occasionally behave towards actresses,

'I also am of noble birth!' But these foolish vapourings did not last long, and I merely retained the strongest self-respect. Nothing on earth would have induced me to soil the clean blood that flows in my veins, and I felt disgust only at the licentious life of the stage and the attentions paid to actresses, even when they are devoid of beauty. I have lived on the stage as if it were a nunnery, for one can be virtuous anywhere when resolved to be so. The Pedant was like a father to me, and as for Herod, he would have broken the bones of any man who dared touch me or even speak rudely to me. Players though they be, they are most worthy people, and I commend them to your goodness if they are ever in need. I owe it to them in great part that I am able to stand before you without blushing, and to proclaim myself your daughter. My only regret is that I should have been the unfortunate cause of the mishap to the Duke de Vallombreuse, your son, and I wish I could have entered your family under happier auspices."

"You have nothing to reproach yourself with, my dear child, for you could not possibly divine the truth in all these mysteries, a truth brought out suddenly by a concourse of circumstances that would be declared

romantic did one come upon it in a book. The joy I feel at finding you as well fitted to take your place amongst us as though you had not been living amid all the chances of a wandering life and the temptations of a profession not usually very strait-laced, compensates for the pain my son's wound gives me. Whether he lives or dies, I certainly will never blame you for it; and in any case your virtuous resistance spared him the horror of a crime. Let us drop that subject, therefore, and tell me who was, among your liberators, the young fellow who appeared to direct the attack and who wounded Vallombreuse? I suppose he was an actor, although he struck me as a man of high breeding and great courage."

"Yes, father," replied Isabella, a lovely modest flush mantling her cheeks, "he is an actor. But if I may reveal a secret that has ceased to be one, as far as the Duke is concerned, I shall own that Captain Fracasse — that is the part he plays — conceals under his mask a nobleman's features, and under his stage appellation an illustrious name."

"Yes, it seems to me I have heard something to that effect," said the Prince. "It would indeed have been surprising to find a mere actor rash enough to

interfere with the Duke de Vallombreuse, and to fight him; it takes noble blood to inspire such audacity in a man, and a nobleman alone can overcome a nobleman, just as diamond alone can cut diamond."

The Prince's aristocratic pride was somewhat soothed by the thought that his son had not been badly wounded by one of low degree, and that matters appeared to have been conducted in regular fashion. The fight was really a duel between persons of equal rank, and the motive for it was a perfectly proper one. There was no danger of harm to the proprieties in such a meeting as that.

"What is the name of that brave champion," went on the Prince; "of that trusty knight, the protector of innocence?"

"Baron de Sigognac," answered Isabella in a slightly trembling voice, "and I do not hesitate to name him, for I know your generosity; you are too honourable to prosecute him for the unhappy outcome of a victory which no one regrets more deeply than he does."

"Sigognac?" said the Prince, "I fancied the family was extinct. Is it not a Gascony house?"

"Yes, father; his home is near Dax."

"The very same, then. The Sigognacs bear punning arms: on a field azure three storks or, two and one. They belong to the very oldest aristocracy; Palamedes de Sigognac distinguished himself in the first crusade, and a Raimbaud de Sigognac, who must have been this young man's father, was a great friend and comrade of Henry IV in the days of his youth. He did not follow him to Court, his affairs being, it is said, in very bad shape, and there were more blows than halfpence to be got where he of Béarn led."

"These affairs were in such very bad shape," went on Isabella, "that when our company, one wet night, was compelled to seek a refuge, we found the son in an old ruinous rookery in which he was wasting away the days of his youth; and we dragged him from that Tower of Misery, fearing he would starve to death there out of pride and melancholy. I have never seen ill-fortune better borne."

"Poverty does not destroy nobility," said the Prince; "and any noble house that has preserved its honour may rise again. But why, seeing he was in such stress, did Baron de Sigognac not apply to some of his father's former comrades in arms, or even to the King, who is the natural protector of the nobility?"

"Brave though a man may be, misfortune is apt to make him timid," answered Isabella, "and courage is restrained by shyness. The Baron joined us because he hoped to find some favourable opportunity in Paris, though none did present itself; and in order not to be a burden upon us, he insisted on taking the place of one of our number who died on the road. The part being played masked, he thought it would not be derogatory in him to do so."

"I do not claim to be a wizard," said the Prince, with a kindly and mischievous smile, "but I fancy that the theatrical disguise may have been due to a little bit of a love affair. However, that is none of my business; I am too well acquainted with your high principles, and there is nothing alarming in the fact that a few discreet sighs have been breathed at your feet. Besides, I have not occupied the position of your father long enough to have the right to scold you."

While he spoke, Isabella had turned upon him her great blue eyes, in which the purest innocence and the most absolute frankness were visible. The flush that had risen to her cheek at the mention of Sigognac's name had faded away, and there was no trace of shame or embarrassment on her features. Her father's glance,

God's own glance would have seen nothing reprehensible in her heart.

The conversation had reached this point when Master Laurent's pupil was announced. He was the bearer of a favourable bulletin concerning Vallombreuse's state. The wounded man's condition was as good as could be expected, a turn for the better having followed upon the exhibition of the potion, and the physician now answered for the young Duke's life. The cure was merely a matter of time.

A few days later, Vallombreuse, propped up with pillows, and dressed in a shirt with broad Venetian point-lace collar, his hair parted and brushed, was sitting up in bed enjoying a visit from his faithful friend the Chevalier de Vidalinc, whom he had not hitherto been permitted to see. The Prince sat by the bed, looking with deep joy upon the face of his son, whose features were certainly wan and thin, but free from any alarming symptoms. His lips had regained their colour and life sparkled again in his eyes. Isabella was standing near the bed-head; the young Duke held her hand in his slender fingers, bluish white like those of patients who have been long kept from the sunshine and the open air. As he was not allowed to speak, save in

monosyllables, he took this means of manifesting his affection to her who had been the involuntary cause of his wound, and of giving her to understand how fully he forgave her. The feelings of the brother had replaced those of the lover, and his illness, which had deadened the fires of his passion, had largely contributed to bring about this result. Isabella was now really to him the Countess de Lineuil, and not any longer an actress in Herod's company. He nodded in a friendly way to Vidalinc and gave him his hand for a moment, that being all the physician would permit for the time being.

In two or three weeks' time, Vallombreuse, whose strength was being built up by light food, was able to sit up for some hours at a time in an invalid's chair and to enjoy the open window through which entered the scented air of spring. Isabella often kept him company and read to him, which she did particularly well, her former profession having trained her to use her voice properly and to vary her intonation.

One day she had just finished a chapter and was about to begin another, the argument of which she had already read, when the Duke de Vallombreuse signed to her to put the book down, and said: —

"My dear sister, these adventures are most entertaining, and the author is undoubtedly one of the cleverest men at Court or in town. In every house his book is talked about, I know, yet I prefer your charming conversation to your reading of his work. I certainly did not anticipate I was to be so great a gainer, and the brother is better off than the lover ever was; you are sweet to me now as you were hard before. I find in my tranquil affection for you a charm I had no conception of; you teach me to know a side of the feminine character which was utterly unknown to me. Carried away by violent passion, pursuing the pleasure beauty promised me, becoming excited and irritated when I met with obstacles, I resembled the ferocious huntsman in the legend, whom nothing can stay; the object of my love was to me but a prey, and the idea of resistance struck me as absurd. I used to shrug my shoulders when people spoke of virtue, and I may say without conceit to the only woman who proved really virtuous, that I had abundant reasons for my disbelief. My mother died when I was only three years old; you had not yet been found, and I had not the faintest idea of the purity, tenderness, and delicacy of woman. I saw you, and an irresistible impulse,

partly, no doubt, due to our unknown relationship, attracted me towards you, and for the first time I felt respect as well as passion. Your firmness distracted me, yet pleased me. The more you repelled me, the more I deemed you worthy of me, and even in my most violent moods I always respected you, for I felt the angel in the woman, and the ascendency of celestial purity. Now I am happy, for I have just what I wanted without knowing it, — an affection free from all earthly alloy, unchangeable and eternal; at last I possess a soul."

"You do indeed possess it, dear brother," replied Isabella, "and happy am I to be able to say so. You have in me a devoted sister, who will love you twice as much to make up for lost time, especially if you master your passions, as you have promised our father to do, so that he will no longer be filled with dread on your account, and if you let the good in you come to the surface instead."

"How prettily you can preach," said Vallombreuse, smiling. "It is true that I am an awful monster, but I promise you I shall turn over a new leaf, if not through love for virtue, at least to avoid seeing my elder sister look glum at new escapades of mine.

All the same, I fear I shall always typify folly, just as you will always be the incarnation of common-sense."

"If you go on paying me compliments like that," said Isabella, with a playful air of menace, "I shall take to the book again, and you will have to listen to the whole of the story the Moorish corsair was about to relate to the incomparable Princess Amenaïde, his captive, as she sat upon cushions of gold brocade in the cabin of his galley."

"I do not deserve to be punished so severely; and even at the risk of passing for a chatterer I am resolved to talk, for that confounded physician has too long set the seal of silence upon my lips and made me look like a statue of Harpocrates."

"But I am afraid you will tire yourself; your wound is scarcely cicatrised. Master Laurent particularly recommended that I should read to you in order to rest your lungs while listening to me."

"Master Laurent talks nonsense, and wants to make himself out a greater man than he is. My lungs inhale and exhale the air as easily as they ever did. I feel perfectly well, and I have a great mind to go off for a ride through the forest."

"Talking would be better than that; it is less dangerous, I am sure."

"I shall soon be on my feet again, dear sister, and then I shall introduce you into the society which befits your rank, and in which your perfect beauty will unfailingly bring endless adorers to your feet, from among whom the Countess de Lineuil will be able to select a husband."

"I have no desire to wed, and I beg you will not suppose that this is merely a way of speaking and that I should be sorry to have people act upon it. I have bestowed my hand upon a suitor so often in plays that I am in no hurry to do so in real life. I ask for no pleasanter fate than remaining with the Prince and you."

"A father and a brother are not everything, even in the case of ladies who care no whit for the world. Such affection does not fully satisfy the heart."

"It will satisfy mine, at all events, and the day it ceases to do so, I shall enter a convent."

"That would be carrying austerity rather too far. Does not the Chevalier de Vidalinc, for instance, strike you as likely to make an excellent husband?"

"Assuredly, and the woman he weds may count

herself fortunate; but no matter how charming he may be, I shall never be his wife."

"Vidalinc is rather ruddy, and it may be that like our late King Louis, thirteenth of the name, you dislike that sort of complexion and that colour of hair, which, nevertheless, is highly esteemed by painters. But let us drop Vidalinc. What think you of the Marquis de l'Estang, who came to see me the other day, and who never once took his eyes from you the whole time his visit lasted? He was so dazzled by your grace, so taken aback by your incomparable beauty, that he boggled his compliments and stammered and stuttered. Apart from that shyness of his, which you ought readily to forgive, since you were the cause of it, he is an accomplished cavalier, handsome, young, high-born, and very wealthy. He would be an excellent match for you."

"Since I have the honour of belonging to your illustrious family," returned Isabella, somewhat annoyed by her brother's teasing, "over-much humility would be out of place, so I shall not say that I consider myself unworthy of making such a match, but if the Marquis de l'Estang were to ask my father for my hand, I would refuse him. I have already told you, brother,

that I mean not to wed, as you very well know, though you will go on teasing me about it."

"How fiercely virginal you are, sister! Diana, herself, in her groves and dales of Hæmus was not more resolute than you. Yet, if we may believe the gossip-mongers of mythology, my lord Endymion found favour in her eyes. You fire up because I suggest, in the course of conversation, some suitable matches, but if you do not approve of them, we can easily find others."

"I do not fire up — but really you are talking a great deal too much for a sick man, and I shall get Master Laurent to scold you. You shall not have the chicken-wing for supper; there!"

"I am mute as mute can be, in that case," said Vallombreuse submissively, "but I warrant you I shall be the one to find a husband for you."

In order to punish her brother for his persistency, Isabella began the story of the Barbary corsair in a loud, vibrant voice that drowned his: —

"My father, the Duke de Fossombrone, was walking with my mother, one of the most beautiful women in the Duchy of Genoa, if indeed she were not the most beautiful, upon the shore of the Mediterranean,

which was reached by steps leading down from the superb villa which he inhabited in summer, when Algerine pirates, concealed behind rocks, sprang upon him, overpowered him in spite of his desperate resistance, left him for dead where he lay, and carried off my mother, shrieking and struggling, to their boat, which pulled away at great speed, and rejoined their galley which was sheltered in a creek. Having been presented to the Dey, my mother took his fancy, and she became his favourite . . ."

Vallombreuse here closed his eyes and pretended to fall asleep, for the purpose of spoiling Isabella's revenge. But his feigned slumber soon became real, and the young girl, seeing him sound asleep, withdrew on tiptoe.

Isabella felt troubled, in spite of herself, by the conversation that had taken place, and in which the Duke appeared to have manifested a certain malicious intention. She wondered whether Vallombreuse secretly bore a grudge against Sigognac, whose name he had never once spoken since the attack on the castle, and was trying to place an insurmountable obstacle between him and her by marrying her off, or whether he was trying to ascertain if her feelings had changed

with her condition. Isabella knew not which of these alternatives might be the right one. The fact that she had turned out to be the young Duke's sister necessarily put an end to the rivalry between Sigognac and him, but on the other hand it was difficult to believe that the Duke, with his proud, haughty, and vindictive character, could have forgotten the shame of his first defeat, let alone of his second. Surely, though the positions were reversed, Vallombreuse must still bear hatred to Sigognac in his heart of hearts; and even supposing that he was noble-minded enough to forgive him, he could not be expected to be generous enough to feel affection for him and to welcome him into the family. There was evidently no hope of a reconciliation; and, besides, the Prince would never look kindly upon the man who had imperilled the Duke's life.

These thoughts saddened Isabella and she sought in vain to shake off her melancholy. As long as she had considered that her profession would prove a bar to Sigognac's success, she had put away all idea of ever being his wife; but now that an unexpected stroke of fate had loaded her with every good gift one may desire, she would have been delighted to reward with

the gift of her hand the lover who had asked for it when she was poor and looked down upon. She thought it mean not to share her prosperity with him who had been her companion in poverty; but all she could do was to remain absolutely faithful to him, for she did not venture to speak on his behalf to the Prince or to Vallombreuse.

The young Duke was ere long well enough to take his meals with his father and sister. He behaved with respectful deference to the Prince, and with loving and delicate tenderness towards Isabella. He gave proof that, in spite of his apparent frivolities, he was much more cultured than would have been thought to be the case, in view of his fondness for women, duels, and all manner of dissipations. Isabella took a modest part in the conversation, and always spoke with such sense, cleverness, and timeliness, that the Prince was amazed, especially as the girl's tact led her to avoid any approach to preciosity and pedantry.

One day, after Vallombreuse had fully regained his strength, he proposed to his sister to ride in the park. The pair rode down a long avenue, the mighty trees of which formed a vault of verdure over their heads, which the rays of the sun could not penetrate. The

Duke was as handsome as ever, Isabella looked lovely, and never did a more graceful couple ride side by side. The only difference was that the young fellow's face was bright, while the girl's was sad. At times Vallombreuse's sallies forced her to smile faintly, but she would straightway become melancholy again. Her brother, however, did not appear to notice her sorrow, and grew livelier every moment.

"What a delightful thing it is to be alive!" said he. "How few people realise the amount of pleasure to be derived from the simple act of breathing. Never have the trees seemed so green to me, the sky so blue, and the flowers so sweet. I feel as if I had been born yesterday and were beholding creation for the first time. When I reflect that I might have been lying under a marble tombstone instead of riding about with my sister, I want to shout aloud for the mere pleasure of the thing. My wound does not pain me in the slightest, and I do really think we may venture upon a short gallop home, where the Prince is wearying for our return."

Notwithstanding Isabella's objections, for she was still fearful of Vallombreuse hurting himself, the latter spurred his steed and the two horses went off at score.

When they reached the foot of the outer stairs, the young Duke said, as he lifted his sister from the saddle: —

"Now I am grown up, and I shall be allowed to go out alone."

"What? do you want to leave us already, when you are scarcely cured, you naughty fellow?"

"Yes; I must be off on a trip that will take me away for a few days," replied Vallombreuse lightly.

And the next morning, as he had announced, he started, after taking leave of the Prince, who made no objection to his going.

On leaving, he said to Isabella, in a mysterious tone: —

"Good-bye for the present, little sister; you will have reason to be satisfied with me."

XIX

NETTLES AND COBWEBS

HEROD'S advice was wise, and Sigognac determined to follow it; besides, now that Isabella had turned out to be a great lady, there was no attraction for him in the company of the players. It was desirable to disappear for a season, to be lost to memory as to sight, until the resentment caused by Vallombreuse's probable death had cooled down. So after having bidden farewell, not without some emotion, to the worthy actors who had proved such true comrades, Sigognac rode away from Paris, bestriding a strong nag, and his pockets handsomely filled with pistoles, his share of the receipts. He travelled by easy stages towards his ruinous home, for after the storm a bird always returns to its nest, even though it be of twigs and old straw only. It was the one and only refuge left him, and in his despair he took a sort of pleasure in returning to the wretched castle of his fathers, which, perhaps, it would have been as well had

he never left, for, indeed, his fortunes had not greatly improved, and his last adventure would certainly do him harm.

"It seems," he said to himself as he rode on, "that I was predestined to die of starvation and ennui within my cracked walls and under that roof of mine which leaks like a sieve. No man can avoid his fate, and I shall dree my doom; I shall be the last of the Sigognacs."

There is no necessity to describe in detail the trip itself, which lasted some three weeks and which no interesting incident varied. Suffice it to say that one fine evening Sigognac saw from afar the two turrets of his castle, lighted up by the setting sun and standing out bright against the purple background of the horizon. An effect of light caused them to look nearer than they really were, and the rays of the sun burned glowing red upon one of the few panes of glass on the façade, so that it looked like a huge carbuncle.

The Baron was strangely moved at the sight. Much as he had suffered within that ruinous castle, nevertheless he experienced, on returning to it, the same feeling that one experiences on the return of an old friend whose faults have been forgotten during his absence.

It was in that place that he had spent his life in poverty, obscurity, and solitude, but not unmingled with certain delights, since youth can never be wholly unhappy, and even when most discouraged still owns dreams and hopes. The very habit of pain ends in procuring a certain charm, and one takes to regretting some sorrows more than joys.

Sigognac spurred up his horse and quickened its pace, so as to arrive before night fell. The red glow on the pane had gone out, for the sun had sunk lower, and only a narrow segment of its disk showed above the brown line of the heather against the heavens. The manor was but a gray spot that almost melted into the shadows around, but Sigognac was well acquainted with the road, and soon struck the way, unfrequented of yore and quite deserted now, that led to the castle. The greedy branches of the hedges lashed his boots, and at the sound of the horse's steps the frightened frogs hopped away through the grass wet with the evening dew. The faint, distant bark of a dog, hunting alone as if to distract itself, was audible in the deep silence of the countryside.

Sigognac pulled up to listen more attentively. He thought he recognised Miraut's cracked bark. Soon

the sound drew nearer and changed to quick joyous yelps, broken by the speed of breathless running. Miraut had scented his master, and was hastening towards him as fast as his old legs could carry him. The Baron whistled in a peculiar way, and in a moment more the good old faithful hound broke impetuously through a hole in the hedge, yowling, sobbing, and uttering cries that were well-nigh human. Although breathless and panting, he sprang at the horse's head, tried to leap up on the saddle to reach his master, and exhibited the most extravagant marks of canine joy ever manifested by an animal of his race. Argus itself, when it recognised Ulysses in the house of Eumæus, was not as happy as was Miraut. Sigognac bent down and patted him on the head to calm his mad sympathy.

Satisfied with this welcome and resolving to be the bearer of the glad tidings to the dwellers in the castle, — that is, to Pierre, Bayard, and Beelzebub, — Miraut went off like a shot, and started barking so furiously in front of the old servant seated in the kitchen that he made him understand something out of the way was occurring.

"Could it be the young master coming back?" said

Peter rising and following Miraut, who was dragging at his garment. Night having fallen, Peter had lighted a few bits of resinous wood on the hearth, on which he was cooking his frugal supper, and their ruddy, smoky blaze suddenly showed him, at the end of the road, Sigognac on horseback.

"It is you for sure, my lord," cried worthy Peter in joyous tones at the sight of his master. "Miraut had already told me in his own trusty language; for we are so lonely here that we all, animals and man, having no one else to talk to, have ended by understanding each other. All the same, as I had had no word from you that you were on your way back, I was afraid I might be mistaken. Well, expected or not, you are very welcome back to your own domain, and we shall do the best we can to prove it to you."

"Yes, it is I indeed, dear Peter, and Miraut told you true. I am back, if not any richer, at least safe and sound. Come, you go first with the torch, and let us return to the house."

With some difficulty Peter managed to throw open the leaves of the old gate, and Baron de Sigognac passed through under the arch fantastically illumined by the gleam of the torch. The three storks carved

upon the coat of arms on the vaulting, seemed to come to life when the light fell upon them and to flap their wings by way of saluting the last representative of the family of which they had been the symbol for so many centuries. Then like a trumpet blast was heard a prolonged neighing; it was Bayard scenting his master from his stable, and straining his wheezy lungs to produce this sonorous call.

"Yes, yes, I hear you, my poor Bayard," said Sigognac, springing from his horse and throwing the reins to Peter. "I am coming to say how do you do to you."

He started towards the stable, but nearly tripped over a black thing that got between his legs, miauling, purring, and arching its back. It was Beelzebub expressing its happiness in the various ways nature has allowed to the feline race. Sigognac picked it up and lifted it to his face. The cat was happy as happy could be; its round eyes flashed with phosphorescent light, it quivered and trembled with excitement, it opened and closed its paws with their retractile claws, and fairly choked itself trying to purr louder and faster, while it stuck its nose, black and rough as a truffle, into Sigognac's mustache with maddest affection.

After having long caressed it, for he did not disdain these proofs of the love of his humble friends, the Baron put Beelzebub down gently, and then came Bayard's turn to be petted over and over again with stroking of the neck and patting of the quarters. The good old horse rested his head upon his master's shoulder, scraped the ground with his fore foot, and tried to curvet and prance. He courteously received the nag which was stabled alongside of him, for he felt sure of Sigognac's affection; it may be also that he was not sorry to have company of his own kind, a thing he had not known for many a long day.

"And now that I have returned the civilities of my animals," said Sigognac to Peter, "it strikes me that it would not be out of the way to pass into the kitchen and see what there is in your pantry. I made but a poor breakfast this morning, and I skipped the dinner, for I wanted to reach the end of my travels before night. I have somewhat broken away from austere habits in Paris, and I should not be sorry to sup, even if off a mere bone."

"There is some miassou left, a bit of bacon, and goat's-milk cheese. It is wild and rustic fare, that you may not fancy since you have tasted fine cookery, but

if it does not tickle the palate, it at least keeps one from starving."

"And no man can ask more of food," replied Sigognac; "nor will you find me ungrateful, as you seem to fear, to the simple fare that nourished me in youth, and made me healthy, alert, and vigorous. So on with your miassou, your bacon and cheese, with as much style as if you were a majordomo bringing on a peacock with outspread tail upon a golden platter."

Thus reassured on the score of his cookery, Peter quickly laid the cover on the table where Sigognac had been in the habit of eating his frugal meals. He spread a cloth that was yellowish but clean, put a goblet on one side, and on the other an earthenware jug filled with ordinary and rather sharp wine, by way of symmetrically balancing the piece of miassou, and then stood behind his master like a butler in attendance upon a prince. In conformity with the old established custom, Miraut sat up on his right, and Beelzebub squatted on his left, watching Baron de Sigognac ecstatically, and following the trips his hand made from the plate to his mouth and from his mouth to the plate, in expectation of the bits of food he impartially threw to them.

This curious picture was lighted by the splint of resinous wood which Peter had stuck inside the mantelpiece, on an iron holder, to prevent the smoke filling the room. The scene was so exactly like that described at the outset of this tale that the Baron, struck by it, fancied he must have dreamed, and that he had never left his home.

Time, which had flown so fast in Paris, seemed to have stood still in the castle of Sigognac. The Hours had fallen asleep and had not taken the trouble to overset their sand-glasses now filled with dust. Everything was in the same place. The spiders still slumbered in the corners of their gray hammocks, awaiting the coming of mythical flies; some of them had lost courage and had failed to repair their webs, not being in condition to extract silk from their bodies. From a coal on the white ashes on the hearth, which appeared not to have burned itself out since the Baron's departure, rose a slender wisp of smoke like that of a pipe nearly out. Only, in the court-yard the hemlock and the nettles had grown taller, the grass that encompassed the paving-stones was higher, and the branch of a tree that formerly barely reached the kitchen window now sent a leafy shoot into it through

a broken pane. Otherwise there was no difference visible.

In spite of himself Sigognac again fell under the influence of his surroundings. His thoughts of olden days crowded back into his brain, and he sank into silent reveries respected by Peter and which neither Miraut nor Beelzebub ventured to disturb by unseasonable caresses. All that had happened seemed to him like adventures he had read in some book and which he dimly recollected. Captain Fracasse, already half effaced, showed in the distant past like a pale phantom that had come out of him and that was for ever separated from him. His fight with Vallombreuse recurred to his memory merely as a queer pantomime with which his will had nothing to do. None of the acts he had performed during that period of time seemed to be connected with him, and his return to the castle had broken the ties that bound them to his life. His love for Isabella alone had not departed; he found it again strong in his heart, but rather in the form of an aspiration of the soul than of a real passion, for she who was the object of it could never be his. He understood that the wheels of his car of life, jolted for a moment into a different rut, had returned to the one

in which they had always run, and he quietly resigned himself to the fact. The only thing he blamed himself for was having momentarily indulged in hopes and illusions. But it serves unfortunates right! Why the devil should they want to be happy?

He managed, however, to shake off this torpor, and as he caught sight of timid questionings in Peter's glance, he briefly narrated to the worthy fellow the chief facts in his history which might interest him. When the old chap heard the account of his pupil's two duels with Vallombreuse, he was fairly radiant with delight at having such a disciple, and with a stick in his hand he repeated against the wall the thrusts that Sigognac described.

"Alas! my dear Peter," said the Baron with a sigh, "you taught me too well those secrets of fencing which no one knows as you do. That victory has been my destruction and has sent me back into my poor gloomy manor for many a long day, if not for ever. My particular ill fortune consists in the fact that triumph casts me down and ruins my chances instead of improving them. It would have been better for me to have been wounded, or even killed, in that unhappy affair."

"A Sigognac cannot be beaten," said the old servant epigrammatically. "No matter what may happen, I am glad you killed that Vallombreuse. I am sure you did it according to rule, and there is no more to be said; for what possible objection can a man raise if he is laid out dead with a fine thrust when he is himself on his guard?"

"None, of course," returned Sigognac, smiling at the fencing master's philosophy. "But I feel somewhat weary; light my lamp and show me to my room."

Peter obeyed, and the Baron, preceded by his dog and his cat, slowly ascended the old staircase; the frescoes were dulled by time and the colouring had lost its original hues. The Hercules in their cases were paler than ever, and appeared to be striving hard to upbear the sham cornice, the weight of which seemed to overpower them. Their worn muscles swelled desperately, but they had been unable to prevent pieces of plaster falling from the walls. The Roman emperors were not in much better plight, and though as they stood in their niches they affected to put on braggart and victorious airs, they had lost crown or sceptre or purple. The painted trellis-work on the vaulting had

broken away in many a spot, and the winter rains, making their way in through the cracks, had laid out new Americas alongside the old continents and isles already depicted there.

The ruinous condition of his abode struck Sigognac painfully, although he had paid no particular attention to it before he had left his home, and it made him sad and thoughtful. It was to him the outward and visible sign of the decadence of his family, and he said to himself: —

"If this roof were capable of feeling any pity for the family it has so long sheltered, it ought to fall down and crush me on the spot."

On reaching the door of the apartments, he took the lamp from Peter's hand, thanked him, and dismissed him, for he desired to conceal his feelings from him. He then slowly traversed the room where, a few months before, the players had sat down to supper. The remembrance of that pleasant occasion made it look all the more gloomy now; the silence, which had been broken for a moment, had settled down upon it more gloomy, more intense, and more dreadful than ever. The sound of a rat gnawing the wood-work sounded strangely loud in the tomb-like hall. The portraits,

lighted by the faint gleams of the lamp, and leaning against their faded gilt frames as if these were balconies, had a disquieting look; they seemed to be endeavouring to break away from their shadowy backgrounds and to step down to welcome their unfortunate descendant. These ancient effigies were filled with spectral life; their painted lips were moving and whispering words audible to the soul but unheard by the ear; their gaze was turned sadly to the ceiling; the damp condensed in great drops upon their painted cheeks and shone in the light like tears. There could be no doubt that the spirits of his ancestors were lingering round those representations of the terrestrial shapes they had formerly animated, and Sigognac was aware of their invisible presence in the secret horror of the semi-obscurity. Every one of these figures tricked out in farthingales or breastplates looked desolate and forlorn. One portrait alone, the last of the series, that of Sigognac's mother, appeared to smile. The light happened to fall exactly upon it, and whether it was that the painting was more recent and the work of a cleverer hand, or that the soul had actually returned to revivify the simulacrum for an instant, the portrait wore an air of assured and joyous tenderness which surprised Sigognac,

and which he took for a favourable omen, the expression of the face having hitherto always struck him as melancholy.

He at last entered his own room, and put the lamp down upon the little table on which still lay the volume of Ronsard that he was busy reading when the players knocked by night at the gates of his castle. The paper, covered with corrections, — it was the rough draft of an unfinished sonnet, — was still in the same place. The bed, which had not been made up, still bore the imprint of the forms that had last rested upon it. Isabella had slept there, and her lovely head had rested on the pillow, the confidant of so many dreams.

As this thought occurred to Sigognac, he felt his heart exquisitely tortured by a delicious pain, if it be permissible to collocate words naturally contrary in meaning. His imagination retraced vividly to him the girl's lovely charms, while his reason, with importunate, gruesome voice, repeated that Isabella was for ever lost to him. Yet his amorous fancy seemed to show him her sweet and lovely face peeping out between the half-parted curtains like the face of a chaste spouse awaiting her husband's return.

To rid himself of these visions that told on his fortitude, he undressed and got into bed, kissing the place where Isabella had lain; nevertheless, fatigued though he was, sleep was tardy in coming to him, and for more than an hour his glance wandered round the ruinous room, now following a strange effect of the moonlight upon the dimmed window-panes, now fixed intently upon the duck-hunter among the blue and yellow trees of the forest represented on the tapestry.

But if the master was awake, the animal was asleep; Beelzebub, curled up in a ball at Sigognac's feet, was snoring as did Mahomet's cat upon the prophet's sleeve. The creature's deep peace at last communicated itself to the man, and the young Baron departed into the land of dreams.

When the dawn came, Sigognac felt even more painfully than the night before the state of dilapidation into which his place had fallen; for daylight has no pity for ruins and old things; it cruelly brings out their poverty, their wrinkles, their spots, and discolouration, the dust and the mould that lie upon them. Night is more kindly; it softens everything with its friendly shades, and with the fold of its robe wipes away all the

tears of things. The rooms that he remembered so large, looked small now, and he was amazed to have thought of them as vast; but ere long he fitted himself again to the proportions of his residence, and took up his old life as he might have put on an old coat laid aside for a time in favour of a new one. He felt himself at his ease in the worn-out garment, every crease in which was the result of a habit.

His days were spent in the following manner: he first offered up a short prayer in the ruined chapel where reposed his ancestors, cleared away the brambles from some broken tomb, ate his frugal meal, fenced with Peter, rode out on Bayard, or on the nag, which he had kept, returned home after a long excursion, silent and dull as of yore, supped with Miraut and Beelzebub on either side of him, and went to bed, where, to court sleep, he glanced over one of the odd volumes, read time and time again, that formed his library, the prey of the hungry rats. Nothing remained, it will be seen, of the dashing Captain Fracasse, the bold rival of the Duke de Vallombreuse. Sigognac was truly once more the castellan of the Tower of Poverty.

One day he went down to the garden where he had taken the two young actresses. It was more uncul-

tivated, wilder, and fuller of weeds than ever; yet the eglantine that had provided a couple of blooms — a rose for Isabella and a bud for Serafina, so that it should not be said these two ladies had left a flower-garden without bearing away a flower or two — the eglantine appeared to have prided itself, on this occasion as on the former one, on being in bloom; on the same branch had opened two lovely little roses, with delicate petals unfolded in the morning light and retaining in their hearts two or three pearly dew-drops.

Sigognac felt deeply moved at the sight, which awakened the remembrance of the words Isabella had spoken: "During the walk in your garden, when you were parting the brambles in my way, you picked for me a little wild rose, the only gift in your power. I let fall a tear upon it before putting it in my bosom, and I silently gave you my heart in exchange."

He plucked the rose, breathed in its scent lovingly, and kissed its petals, imagining them the lips of his love, lips no less soft, rosy, and perfumed. Since he had parted from Isabella his thoughts dwelt unceasingly upon her, and he had come to understand how incomplete his life was without her. At first, the bewilderment caused by the crowding together of so many

adventures, the amazement due to the sudden changes of fortune he had beheld, together with the inevitable distractions consequent on a long trip, had prevented his understanding the real condition of his own heart. But now that he was plunged once more into solitude, quiet, and silence, it was Isabella who figured in all his thoughts and whose image filled his brain and his heart. The very memory of Yolande had vanished as does the lightest of vapours. He did not even ask himself whether he had ever really loved that proud beauty; he had completely forgotten her. And when for the hundredth time he had reckoned up all the obstacles between himself and his happiness, he would wind up with, "Yet Isabella loves me."

Two or three months passed away in this fashion, when one day, Sigognac being in his room putting the final touch on a sonnet in praise of his lady-love, Peter entered and informed his master that there was a gentleman who wished to speak to him.

"A gentleman who wishes to speak to me!" said Sigognac. "You are mistaken. No one has anything to say to me. However, in view of the rarity of the occurrence, show up this strange mortal. What is his name?"

"He refused to give it, saying that it would not convey any information to you," returned Peter as he threw open both leaves of the door.

On the threshold appeared a handsome young fellow, wearing an elegant riding-dress of nut-brown cloth, trimmed with green, gray felt boots with silver spurs, and in his hand a broad-brimmed beaver with long green feather, so that his proud, delicate, and lovely features, which many a woman might well have envied, showed plainly with their lines and contours that might have been those of a Greek statue.

This accomplished cavalier evidently made no pleasant impression upon Sigognac, who turned slightly pale, sprang to his sword hanging at his bedhead, drew it, and fell on guard.

"By Jove! my lord Duke, I fancied I had quite done for you. Is it you or your shade whom I behold?"

"It is I myself, Hannibal de Vallombreuse, in flesh and blood," replied the young Duke, "and very far from dead. But pray put up your sword without further ado. We have fought twice already, and you know the old saying that twice is pleasant, but thrice is a bore. I do not come to you as a foe. If I have reason to reproach myself with certain peccadilloes,

Sigognac . . . sprang to his sword hanging at his bedhead, drew it, and fell on guard

you have taken your revenge very thoroughly, and consequently we are quits. By way of proving that my intentions are good, here is a commission from His Majesty, who bestows a regiment upon you, my father and I having reminded the King of the services rendered by the Sigognacs to his ancestors. I wished to bring it to you myself, as a pleasant piece of news. And now that I am your guest, please have killed and spitted any creature you like, but for Heaven's sake, give me something to eat. The inns on the road are most wretched, and my equipages are stuck in the sand at some distance from here, with all the victuals I brought along."

"I greatly fear, my lord Duke," returned Sigognac, with playful courtesy, "that the dinner I shall set before you may appear to be a piece of revenge on my part, but I beg you will not attribute to rancour the poor fare you will have to put up with. Your frank and cordial ways touch me deeply; henceforth you have no more devoted friend than I, and although you scarcely need my services, you may command me in all things. Here, Peter, get hold of some eggs, chickens, and meat, and try to regale his lordship to the best of your ability, for he is fairly starving and is not used to it as we are."

Peter provided himself with a number of the pistoles sent him by his master, and which he had never yet spent, jumped on the nag, and galloped off to the nearest village in quest of provisions. He managed to get hold of a few chickens, a ham, a flagon of old wine, and a pasty of ducks' livers, a delicacy worthy of figuring upon the table of a prelate or a prince, which he discovered in the priest's house, though he had some difficulty in persuading the ecclesiastic to let him have it.

He was back within an hour, intrusted the turning of the spit to a tall, pale, ragged wench he had met on the road and sent on to the castle, and himself set the table in the portrait gallery, selecting from the earthenware on the dressers the plates and dishes that were merely chipped or cracked. As for silver plate, it was needless to think of it, for the last piece of it had long since been sent to the melting-pot. Everything being ready, he entered and announced to his master that the dinner was served.

Vallombreuse and Sigognac sat down opposite each other on the least rickety of the half-dozen chairs, and the young Duke, who was greatly tickled by the novelty of the situation, fell to upon the provisions

collected with such difficulty by Peter, displaying an amusingly keen appetite. His handsome white teeth, after having disposed of a whole chicken, that, it is true, seemed to have wasted away in life, were gayly biting into a rosy slice of Bayonne ham, making no bones of it, as the saying is. He declared the ducks' livers were the most delicate, exquisite, and ambrosial of food, and the ordinary goat's-cheese, streaked and spotted with green, an excellent whetter of thirst. He praised the wine also, which was old and choice, and the rich colour of which glowed ruddy in the old Venetian wine-glasses. He was in such high good-humour that he nearly burst out laughing once, on beholding Peter's bewildered look when the latter heard his master address his very living guest as the Duke de Vallombreuse, whom he, Peter, supposed to be dead and gone. Sigognac himself, while doing his best to match his guest's ease of manner, could not help feeling wonderment at seeing seated familiarly at his own table the proud and dandified young nobleman, but recently his rival in love, whom twice he had had at his mercy, and who more than once had attempted to have him put out of the way by hired ruffians.

The Duke perceived what was in Sigognac's mind

without the latter having to express himself in words, and when the old servant had withdrawn, first placing on the table a flagon of choice wine and two smaller glasses, intended to allow of the more delicate enjoyment of the precious beverage, the Duke twisted his slight mustache and said to the Baron in a frank and friendly way : —

" I can plainly see, my dear Sigognac, in spite of all your politeness, that my coming here strikes you as strange and sudden. I know you are saying to yourself: ' How comes it that Vallombreuse, so haughty, arrogant, and imperious, has turned from the tiger he was into a lamb that a shepherd lass might lead with a ribbon ? ' Well, during the six weeks I spent on the broad of my back in bed, I had time to turn some things over in my mind, as the bravest of men may well do when he finds himself face to face with eternity ; for death itself is nothing to us aristocrats, who lay down our lives with a grace the middle classes will never be able to imitate. I felt how empty were many of the things I had believed in, and I made up my mind that if I recovered, I would change my way of life. As the love I felt for Isabella was transformed into a pure and holy friendship, there was no reason why I

should hate you. You were no longer my rival, and a brother cannot be jealous of his sister's lover. I recognised and was grateful to you for the respectful affection you had shown her while she was still in a condition of life that admits of liberties being taken with a woman. You had been the first to divine what a beautiful soul she concealed under the dress of the actress. While she was still poor, you had offered her a nobleman's most precious possession, the name of your ancestors. She is therefore yours, now that she is of illustrious birth and wealthy, for Isabella's lover must necessarily be the Countess de Lineuil's husband."

"But," returned Sigognac, "she persistently refused to marry me when it was plain that I was absolutely disinterested."

"That was through excess of delicacy, through angelic sensitiveness and a desire to sacrifice herself to your interests. She feared to spoil your chances and to hurt your fortunes, but the fact that she has now been recognised as my father's daughter has changed matters."

"Yes, I shall now be the obstacle to her success. And therefore I have no right to be less self-sacrificing than she was."

"Do you still love my sister?" asked the Duke gravely. "As her brother, I have the right to ask."

"I love her with my whole heart, soul, and life," answered Sigognac. "I love her more than any man ever loved woman on this earth of ours, where naught is perfect, save Isabella alone."

"In that case, Baron de Sigognac, Captain of the Musketeers, and soon to be the Governor of a province, have your horse saddled and come with me to Vallombreuse, that I may formally present you to the Prince my father and to the Countess de Lineuil my sister. Isabella has refused the hand of the Chevalier de Vidaline and that of the Marquis de l'Estang, both handsome young fellows, i' faith; but I fancy she will need no great urging to accept the Baron de Sigognac."

The next morning saw the Duke and the Baron riding side by side on the road to Paris.

XX

CHIQUITA CONFESSES HER LOVE

A DENSE crowd filled the Place de Grève, although the hour shown on the dial of the Hôtel de Ville clock was still early. Domenico Boccadoro's great roof showed purplish gray against the milky-white sky. The cold shadows it cast stretched out to the centre of the square, and fell upon a grim scaffolding painted blood-red that rose a foot or two above the level of the lower story. From the windows of the neighbouring houses people every now and then put out their heads and drew them in again, on seeing that the show had not yet begun. There was even an old woman who looked out of a dormer-window of the turret at the corner of the square, from which, so tradition says, Queen Marguerite watched the execution of La Môle and Coconnas. The change from a lovely queen to a hideous old hag was not a pleasant one. On the stone cross erected on the edge

of the slope leading down to the Seine, was perched a child who had climbed up there with difficulty, his arms passed over the cross-bar, his legs and knees gripping the shaft, in an attitude as painful as that of the penitent thief, but which he would not have exchanged for the best cake or apple dumpling in the world. From his coign of vantage, he could see perfectly the interesting details of the scaffold, the wheel on which the convicted criminal was to be broken, the ropes with which he was to be bound, the iron bar used in breaking the bones, all of which things were worthy of being noted.

Nevertheless, had any one of the spectators bethought himself of examining the child on his perch more attentively, he would have observed that his features expressed a very different sentiment than that of vulgar curiosity. It was not the horrid attraction of an execution that had drawn thither the dark-complexioned youngster, with his shining teeth and his long black hair, who was clinging desperately with his sun-browned hands to the stone cross-piece. Indeed his delicate features suggested that his sex was not that indicated by his garments. No one, however, bestowed a glance upon him, for every face was instinctively turned

towards the scaffold or towards the quay by which the condemned man was to come.

Among the groups were some faces with which the reader is acquainted. A red nose and a wan face marked Malartic, and just enough of Jacquemin Lampourde's aquiline profile showed above the folds of his cloak, draped in Spanish fashion over his shoulder, to enable one to recognise him unmistakably. And although he wore his hat pulled well down over his face, in order to hide the absence of the ear that Piedgris' bullet had cut off, it was easy to know the tall rascal seated on a post for Bringuenarilles, smoking a long Dutch pipe to while away the time. Piedgris himself was chatting with Tordgueule, and on the steps of the Hôtel de Ville were rambling about in peripatetic fashion a number of the frequenters of the Crown and Radish discoursing of many things. The Place de Grève, where they are all bound to end their lives sooner or later, has a singular fascination for murderers, ruffians, and thieves. Instead of repelling, the grim spot attracts them ; they keep turning round and round its circumference in circles wide at first but growing continually smaller, until at last they fall within it. They like to look at the gibbet on which they will be

hanged; they gaze attentively at its horrible outlines, and the grimaces of the sufferers teach them to become familiar with death, which is precisely the opposite effect to that justice aims at, namely, to terrify rascals by the sight of torture.

Another cause, also, of the affluence of that class of spectators on days when executions take place is that the protagonist of the tragedy is almost always a relative, an acquaintance, or an accomplice. So men go to see their cousin hanged, their bosom friend broken on the wheel, the good fellow whose counterfeit coin they passed boiled in oil. It would be uncivil to keep away from the entertainment. The sufferer, too, finds it pleasant to have around the scaffold an audience composed of friendly faces; it revives and sustains his resolution; a man does not want to show cowardice in the presence of appreciators of true merit, and pride enables him to bear up under pain. Many a one, who amid such surroundings, dies like a Roman, would be more than womanish were he put to death in a cellar.

Seven o'clock struck. The execution was to take place at eight. So Jacquemin Lampourde, on hearing the stroke of the bell, said to Malartic: —

"Did I not tell you we had time for another bottle? You are always so nervous and impatient. What do you say to going back to the Crown and Radish? I hate to stand about first on one leg and then on the other, and to dance attendance on a show. Come now, is it worth waiting so long to see a poor devil broken on the wheel? It is such a tasteless, commonplace, and vulgar spectacle. Now if it were a fine quartering by four horses each ridden by an official of the provost corps, or a matter of tearing the flesh away with red-hot pincers, or the pouring in of boiling pitch or molten lead, something, in a word, ingeniously torturing or ferociously painful, that would do honour to the inventiveness of the judge or the skill of the executioner, then I should not object,—I should remain for the love of the art; but honestly it is not worth doing so for so small a matter."

"I do not think you do justice to the wheel," replied Malartic gravely, as he rubbed his nose, that was redder than ever. "The wheel has its good points."

"There is no accounting for tastes. Every one is carried away by his particular fancy, as a very famous Latin author says, though what his name was I have forgotten, for it is only the names of great warriors

that my memory retains easily. You like the wheel; very well, I shall not quarrel with you on the subject, and I shall stay with you until the end. But you must acknowledge that to behead a man with a damascened blade, with a hollow filled with quicksilver down the upper part, in order to weight it, requires a quick eye, strength, and dexterity, and forms a spectacle at once noble and attractive."

"I grant all that, but it is too soon over; it is a mere flash. Besides, beheading is reserved for the nobility; the block is one of their privileges. Of the vulgar tortures, the wheel strikes me as superior to commonplace hanging, which at best is fit for second-rate malefactors only. Now Agostino is more than a mere thief; he deserves something better than the rope, and the law has shown him no more than the attention which is his due."

"You have always had a weakness for Agostino, no doubt on account of Chiquita, whose strangeness has allured you. I do not share your admiration of that bandit, who is better fitted to ply his trade on highways and in mountain passes, like a *salteador*, than to operate with the refinement needed in a civilised city. He is ignorant of the fine points of the art; he is crabbed,

rough, and countrified in his methods. To cut the Gordian knot is not to undo it, no matter what Alexander may have affirmed. Then he does not make use of the sword, and therein he lacks nobility."

"Agostino's specialty is the navaja, the weapon of his own country; and he has not, like ourselves, trod the floor of fencing-rooms for years. His own style, however, is startling, bold, and original; the way he hurls his knife unites the pleasure of ballistics and the discreet certainty of cold steel. He can kill his man at twenty paces and noiselessly. I must say I deeply regret that his career should be cut short so soon; he was getting along famously, and was bold as a lion."

"For my part," answered Jacquemin Lampourde, "I hold by the academic methods; for, if you let form go, you let everything go. Every time I have to attack a man, I touch him on the shoulder and give him time to fall on guard; then if he wants to defend himself he can do so. The affair becomes a duel; it is not a murder. I am a ruffian, not an assassin. It is true that my thorough knowledge of fencing gives me an advantage, and that I am almost infallible when sword in hand, but it is not cheating to be an expert at the game. I pick up the purse, watch, jewels, and

cloak of the dear departed; any one else would do the same; and after all, it is reasonable that I should benefit, since I have had to do the job. No matter what you may say, that knife business is repellent to me; it may do very well in the country and with people of low degree."

"You are a stickler for principle, Jacquemin Lampourde, as every one knows, and not for worlds would you give it up. All the same, a little fancy work is not out of the way in art."

"I am willing to allow of learned, complex, refined fancy work; but mad and ferocious brutality disgusts me. Besides, Agostino gets drunk with blood, and when the fit is on him he strikes right and left. That is a weak point; when a man drinks the heady wine of murder, he needs a strong head. Now take the case of that house into which he made his way recently to steal money. He killed the husband, who had awakened, and the woman, who was asleep. That was a superfluous murder, very ungallant and overstepping the bounds of cruelty. A woman should never be killed unless she screams, and even then it is better to gag her, for if one happens to be caught, the killing affects the judges and the public and makes a man look like a monster."

"You speak like Saint John Chrysostom," replied Malartic, "and in so peremptory and authoritative a manner that I have nothing to urge. Only, what is to become of poor Chiquita?"

Jacquemin Lampourde and Malartic were thus conversing when a coach coming from the quay drove into the square and caused the crowd to sway back and forth. The horses reared and pawed the ground without being able to proceed, and their hoofs sometimes lighted upon wooden clogs, resulting in an angry interchange of remarks between the footmen and the rabble.

The pedestrians who were thus trodden on would gladly have attacked the coach, had not the ducal arms emblazoned on the panels of the doors inspired them with a certain amount of terror, although they were not the sort to respect any one. The crowd soon became so dense that the coach was compelled to pull up in the centre of the square, and from a distance the coachman, motionless on his box, looked as if he were sitting on the heads of the people. The only way to force a passage through would have been to drive over a large number of the assembled rascals, and as these rascals felt at home on the Place de Grève, they might not have been inclined to submit.

"The rabble is waiting for an execution, and it will not give us room before the poor beggar has been despatched," said a very handsomely dressed young gentleman to his friend, very distinguished-looking also, but dressed more plainly, who sat beside him in the carriage. "The devil take the fool who selects the very moment when we want to cross the Place de Grève to be broken on the wheel! Why could he not wait until to-morrow?"

"I have no doubt," replied the other, "that he would gladly do so, and that he is even more disgusted with the business than we are."

"The best thing we can do, my dear Sigognac, is to make up our minds to look the other way if the sight proves disgusting, though it is no easy matter to do so, when something terrible is being enacted near one. You may remember that Saint Augustine, though he had made up his mind to keep his eyes closed in the circus, opened them on hearing the shout of the rabble."

"In any case, we shall not have long to wait," answered Sigognac. "See yonder, Vallombreuse; the crowd is opening out to let the convict cart pass in."

And indeed a cart, drawn by a sorry horse fit for the

knacker's only, was coming along, surrounded by a number of guards on horseback, rattling like old iron and pushing through the knots of sightseers, on its way to the scaffold. On a plank placed athwart the sideboards of the cart sat Agostino, by the side of a white-bearded Capuchin friar, who held to his lips a brass crucifix polished by the kisses of dying men in sound health. The bandit's hair was tied round with a handkerchief, the knotted ends of which hung down the nape of his neck. His dress consisted of a coarse linen shirt and a pair of old serge breeches; he was dressed for the scaffold, and that is a scanty dress. The executioner, in virtue of his privileges, had already possessed himself of the convict's garments, leaving him only these rags, which were enough for him to die in. A number of cords, the ends of which were held by the executioner, placed at the back of the cart, so as not to be seen by the condemned man, held Agostino fast, though apparently he was free. One of the executioner's aids, sitting sideways on one of the shafts of the cart, held the reins and lashed the poor brute of a horse.

"Why," said Sigognac in the coach, "that is the very bandit who once held me up with his company of

mannikins on the high-road. I told you the story when, in the course of our trip, we passed the spot where the affair occurred."

"I remember," answered Vallombreuse, "and I laughed heartily at it. It would seem, however, that the rascal has since then indulged in more serious business. Ambition has been the death of him. He looks game enough, all the same."

Agostino, who looked a little pale under the sunburn on his face, was gazing anxiously at the crowd, seemingly in search of some one. As he passed by the stone cross, he caught sight of the child mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, who was perched upon it, and had not left his place.

At the sight a flash of joy gleamed in his eyes, and a faint smile flitted over his lips. He nodded very slightly, by way of farewell and legacy at one and the same time, and muttered, "Chiquita!"

"What is the name you have just uttered, my son?" said the Capuchin, waving his crucifix. "It sounds like a woman's name, — a gipsy no doubt, or an abandoned girl. Turn your thoughts upon your salvation rather; you are standing on the brink of eternity."

"I will, Father, for although my hair is black and your beard is white, you are younger than I : every turn of the wheels in the direction of that scaffold makes me ten years older."

"That fellow Agostino, a country brigand who might well feel timid at having to die in presence of Parisians, behaves well," said Jacquemin Lampourde, who had made his way close to the scaffold by elbowing out of his way the idlers and the gossips. "He is not very pale and has not already, as too many in like case, the cadaverous look of one dead. His head is firm ; he holds it well up, and it is a sign of courage in him that he has looked straight at the scaffold. Unless my experience plays me false, he will die decently and gamely, without groaning, struggling, or begging to be allowed to confess in order to gain time."

"There is no fear of his doing that," said Malartic ! "When he was being tortured he stood having eight wedges driven in, rather than open his lips to betray a single one of his comrades."

During this short dialogue, the cart had reached the foot of the scaffold, and Agostino slowly ascended the steps, preceded by the aid, supported by the friar, and followed by the executioner. In less than a minute

he was stretched out and fast bound on the wheel by the executioner's assistants. The executioner himself, having first thrown off his red cloak with the white embroidered ladder on the shoulder, had rolled up his sleeve in order to give his arm more freedom and play, and was bending down to pick up the fatal bar.

This was the crucial moment. The spectators were breathless with eager curiosity; Lampourde and Malartic had turned grave; Briguenarilles himself had ceased to smoke and had removed his pipe from his lips; Tordgueule, feeling that a like fate was awaiting him, looked thoughtful and sad. Suddenly there was a movement among the crowd; the child perched on the cross had slid down, and worming his way through the knots of spectators like an eel, had reached the scaffold and sprung up the steps at a bound. The executioner, who was in the act of raising his bar, was so amazed at the sight of the pale face, with the glittering, resolute eyes, that he stopped in spite of himself and stayed the blow about to fall.

"Get out of this, you young imp," he cried, "or I'll smash your head with my bar."

Chiquita paid no heed to him; little she recked whether she were killed or not. Bending over Agos-

tino, she kissed him on the forehead, said, "I love you!" and, swifter than the lightning's flash, drove into his heart the navaja she had taken back from Isabella. The blow was dealt with so firm a hand that death was almost instantaneous, and Agostino scarcely had time to say, "Thanks!"

"— Cuando esta vivora pica,
No hay remedio en la botica,"

muttered the child with a burst of mad, wild laughter, as she sprang down from the scaffold, on which the executioner, astounded at what had happened, was putting down his now useless iron bar, not knowing whether he ought to break the bones of a dead body.

"Well done! Chiquita, well done!" Malartic could not help calling out, for he had recognised her in her boy's dress.

Lampourde, Bringuenarilles, Piedgris, Tordgueule, and the boon companions of the Crown and Radish, delighted with the performance, formed a compact line in order to prevent the soldiers giving chase to Chiquita. The squabbling and fighting due to this systematic obstruction enabled the child to reach Vallombreuse's coach, pulled up at the corner of the square. She

jumped on the step, and clinging to the door, recognised Sigognac and said to him, gasping and breathless: —

"I saved Isabella; save me now!"

Vallombreuse, who had been deeply interested in the strange scene, shouted to the coachman: —

"Drive on at full speed, and over the rabble if need be!"

But there was no need to do so, for the crowd eagerly made way for the carriage and immediately closed up again to stay the not too vigorous pursuit by the officers of justice. In a few minutes the coach reached the gate Saint-Antoine, and as it was impossible that the report of the affair, which had but just taken place, should have already reached that part of the city, Vallombreuse ordered the coachman to drive less fast, especially as the great pace at which they had been travelling might very easily have awakened suspicion. Once they had got beyond the suburb, he made Chiquita get inside the carriage. Without a word, the girl sat down on a cushion in front of Sigognac. Though she was apparently calm, she was in reality terribly over-excited; her features were unmoved, but her cheeks, usually so wan, were empurpled and caused her great staring eyes to shine in an unnatural manner.

Chiquita was transformed in some sort; the violent effort she had made had turned the child into a young woman. The knife she had driven into Agostino's heart had at the same time plunged into her own; her love had awakened with the stroke, and the strange, almost sexless creature, half child, half will o' the wisp, she had been until then, had ceased to exist. Henceforth she was a woman, and the love thus suddenly born was to prove eternal. A kiss and a knife-thrust were indeed typical of Chiquita's love.

The coach drove on; above the great trees rose already the lofty slate roofs of the castle. Vallombreuse turned to Sigognac and said: —

"You must come up to my rooms and change your dress before I present you to my sister, who is not aware of my trip or of your coming. I planned the surprise, and I expect it will prove entirely successful. Draw down the blind on your side, so that you may not be seen and the surprise be complete. But what are we to do with this young vixen?"

Chiquita, though sunk in thought, heard Vallombreuse's remark.

"Have me taken to the Lady Isabella," said she. "She shall be the arbiter of my fate."

The blinds were drawn down and the carriage rattled into the court of honour. Vallombreuse took Sigognac's arm, and led him to his apartments, having first ordered a servant to take Chiquita to the Countess de Lineuil.

On seeing the girl, Isabella laid down the book she was reading and looked at her questioningly. Chiquita remained motionless and silent until the footman had withdrawn; then with singular solemnity, she drew near Isabella and taking her hand said to her: —

"The knife is in Agostino's heart. I have no master now, and I feel the need of attaching myself to some one. Next to him who is dead, I love you better than any one on earth; you gave me the pearl necklace and you kissed me. Will you let me be your slave, your dog, your gnome? Give me a black rag or two to wear mourning for my love, and let me sleep across your door. I shall not be in your way. When you want me, whistle like this" — and she whistled. "I shall appear at once. Are you willing?"

For sole reply Isabella drew Chiquita to her heart, kissed her on the forehead, and accepted the soul that was giving itself to her.

XXI

WEDDING BELLS

ACCUSTOMED to Chiquita's strange and mysterious ways, Isabella had not questioned her, preferring to wait for explanations until the queer girl should have got over her excitement. She plainly enough understood that there was some terrible drama at the back of the affair, but the poor child had rendered her such true services that Isabella felt she must welcome her without inquiring into what was evidently a desperate case.

Having intrusted her to the care of one of her maids, she resumed the reading Chiquita's entrance had interrupted, although she was not much interested in the book. When she had read through a few pages, she found that she was paying no attention to the story; she put in the marker, and laid the volume on the table by the side of some needlework she had commenced. Resting her head on her hand and letting her gaze wander into space, she indulged in her usual train of thought.

"What has become of Sigognac?" she said to herself. "Does he still think of me? Does he still love me? No doubt he has returned to his wretched castle, and believing my brother is dead, he dares not show himself; he is stopped by that imaginary obstacle. If it were not so, he would have made an effort to see me; he would at least have written to me. Perhaps he is discouraged by the reflection that I am now a great match. Or it may be that he has forgotten me! But no, that is impossible. I ought to have let him know that Vallombreuse is cured of his wound; yet it is not proper for a well-bred girl to use such means of recalling a lover who has gone away; it would offend the proprieties. I often wonder whether I should not have been better off if I had remained a simple actress; I could at least have seen him every day, and secure in my virtue and his respect, I could have quietly enjoyed the delight of being loved. I feel sad and lonely in this splendid castle, in spite of my father's tender affection. If Vallombreuse were here, even, he would keep me company, but his absence is growing longer, and I try in vain to make out what he meant by the words he uttered smilingly when he left, — 'Good-bye, sister; you will have reason to be satisfied with me.' At

times I fancy I have got at his meaning, but I dare not dwell upon the thought, for the disappointment would be bitter indeed. But if it were true, I should go crazy with happiness."

The Countess de Lineuil,— for it is perhaps taking a liberty to call a Prince's acknowledged daughter plain Isabella — had got so far in her monologue, when a tall footman entered and inquired whether the Countess could see the Duke de Vallombreuse, who had just returned from his trip and wished to pay his respects to her.

"Ask him to come at once," replied the Countess; "I shall be delighted to see him."

In five minutes or so the young Duke entered the room, his complexion bright, his glance flashing, his gait firm and light, with the same conquering look he used to wear before he was wounded. He threw his plumed beaver upon a chair, took his sister's hand, and kissed it in tender and respectful fashion.

"My dear Isabella, I have been away longer than I wished, for I have become so accustomed to your gentle presence that it is quite a privation to miss seeing you. Nevertheless I was working for you

on my trip, and the hope of giving you pleasure was a compensation."

"The greatest pleasure you could do me," returned Isabella, "was to remain here with your father and me, and not to go off travelling, when your wound was scarcely cured, to satisfy a passing whim."

"Was I wounded?" laughed Vallombreuse. "Upon my word, I remember it so little that it is as good as forgotten. Never have I felt so well, and my trip has done me a world of good. A saddle is far better for me than an invalid's chair. But you, dear sister, strike me as being thinner and paler. Have you felt weary? This is not a very bright place, and solitude is not good for young girls. Reading and embroidery are pretty dull pastimes when one has nothing else to do, and there are times when the most sedate maid, tired of watching the stagnant water in the moat, would like right well to see a cavalier's face."

"You are trying to make unseasonable fun of me, brother, and you like to tease me because I am a little bit dull. Did I not have the Prince's company, and is he not fatherly, kind, and full of wise and instructive speech?"

"Undoubtedly our father is an accomplished gentle-

man, prudent in counsel, bold in action, a great nobleman at home, learned and proficient in all manner of knowledge. But the sort of enjoyment one gets with him is serious, and I do not intend that my dear sister shall spend her youth in solemn dulness. Now, as you would have neither the Chevalier de Vidalinc nor the Marquis de l' Estang, I set out in quest of the right man and I found just the one you need in the course of my trip. He is a charming, perfect, ideal husband, with whom I am sure you will be desperately in love."

"It is cruel of you, Vallombreuse, to persecute me with your jokes. You know very well, you wicked brother, that I have made up my mind to remain single. I could not give my hand without my heart, and my heart is not mine to give."

"You will sing to another tune when you see the husband I have selected for you."

"Never, never!" replied Isabella, in a voice filled with emotion; "I shall remain faithful to a beloved remembrance, for I do not suppose you intend to make me marry against my will."

"Assuredly not. I am not such a tyrant as all that. All I ask you is not to reject my protégé before you have seen him."

And without waiting for his sister's consent, Vallombreuse rose and went into the next room, returning forthwith, accompanied by Sigognac, whose heart was beating tumultuously. The two young men stood hand in hand for a moment on the threshold hoping Isabella would look their way, but she kept her eyes down shyly, looking at the point of her bodice and thinking of the lover she had no idea was so near her.

Vallombreuse, seeing that she paid no heed to them and that she was sinking into her former train of thought, made a few steps towards her, leading Sigognac by the hand, holding the tips of his fingers as one does with a lady in a dance, and bowed ceremoniously to her, as did Sigognac also. The only difference was that Vallombreuse was smiling and Sigognac turning pale, for while brave where men were concerned, he was timid towards women, as is always the case with great hearts.

"Countess de Lineuil," said Vallombreuse, in a slightly grandiose way and as if purposely exaggerating etiquette, "permit me to present to you a good friend of mine, whom, I trust, you will receive favourably: Baron de Sigognac."

On hearing the name, which she at first supposed to be part of her brother's banter, Isabella started, and cast a quick glance at the new-comer. On seeing that Vallombreuse had not deceived her, her feelings almost overpowered her; she turned very pale, the blood having rushed to her heart; then, as the reaction came, her brow, her cheeks, and her bosom, so far as it could be seen under the kerchief, flushed rosy red. Without a word she rose and threw herself on Vallombreuse's neck and hid her face on his shoulder. Two or three sobs shook the girl's graceful figure, and a few tears wetted the velvet of the doublet at the place where rested her head. Isabella exhibited true maidenliness in the shyly pretty and modest action. It was a way of thanking Vallombreuse, whose ingenious kindness she had fathomed, and as she could not kiss her lover, she kissed her brother instead.

When he thought she had had time to recover herself, Vallombreuse gently freed himself from her embrace, and putting aside her hands, with which she had covered her face to hide her tears, said: —

"Dear sister, pray let us look at your lovely face; else my protégé will fancy that you feel insurmountable repulsion towards him."

Isabella obeyed and turned on Sigognac her beauteous eyes lighted with heavenly joy, in spite of the glittering pearls that yet trembled upon her long lashes. She held her fair hand out to him, and the Baron, bowing low, kissed it tenderly. The kiss thrilled the girl to the heart and she nearly fainted, but it is easy to recover after such a delicious sensation.

"Was I not right," said Vallombreuse, "when I insisted that you would welcome the suitor I had chosen? It is good at times to be obstinate, for if I had not been as firm as you were resolute, our dear Sigognac would have had to return to his place without having seen you; and that would have been a pity, would it not?"

"Yes, I own it, my dear brother. You have given proof in this whole matter of adorable kindness of heart. You alone, under the circumstances, could bring about a reconciliation, since you alone had been the sufferer."

"Indeed," said Sigognac, "the Duke de Vallombreuse has shown himself possessed, so far as I am concerned, of a great and generous heart. He put away a not unnatural resentment, and came to me with open hand and open heart. He has nobly revenged himself for the hurt I did him by placing upon

me a light burden of eternal gratitude, which I shall gladly bear to my dying day."

"Do not mention it, my dear Baron," answered Vallombreuse. "You would have done just the same. Two brave men always end by getting to understand each other; crossed swords bind souls, and we were sure sooner or later to turn into a pair of friends like Theseus and Pirithoüs, Nisus and Euryalus, Pythias and Damon. But do not trouble about me; rather tell my sister how you kept regretting her and thinking of her in that castle of Sigognac of yours, where I nevertheless made one of the best meals in my life, though you did swear it was customary to starve in your habitation."

"I also enjoyed a very good supper there," said Isabella, smiling, "and a very pleasant remembrance it is."

"The end of it will be," returned Sigognac, "that every one will turn out to have feasted regally in my Tower of Hunger; but I am not ashamed of the poverty which interested you in me, dear Isabella. On the contrary, I bless it, for I owe everything to it."

"I am of opinion," said Vallombreuse, "that it would be as well for me to go and greet my father,

and to inform him of your arrival, although it is not unexpected by him, I must confess. And by the way, Countess, is it quite understood that you accept Baron de Sigognac for your husband? I should not like to put my foot into it. You do accept him? All right; then I may withdraw. Engaged couples have sometimes very innocent confidences to exchange, when even a brother's presence is undesirable. I leave you together, feeling sure that you will be obliged to me for doing so. Besides, I was never intended for a gooseberry. Good-bye for the present. I shall return ere long to take Sigognac to the Prince."

Uttering these words in an off-hand way, the young Duke put on his hat and went out, leaving the true lovers to themselves. Pleasant as was his company, his room was pleasanter still.

Sigognac drew near Isabella and took her hand, nor did she withdraw it. For a few moments the pair looked at each other with eyes full of happiness, in a silence more eloquent than words. Long deprived of the pleasure of meeting, Isabella and Sigognac could not gaze sufficiently long on each other. At last the Baron said to her: —

"I can scarcely credit my happiness. Is not mine

a strange fate? You loved me because I was poor and unhappy, and the very cause which should have insured my loss has wrought my fortune. A company of strolling players held for me an angel of beauty and virtue. An attempt on my life won me a friend, and your abduction led to your being recognised by your father, who had sought you in vain. And all this was the result of a waggon losing its way on the moors on a dark night."

"We were meant for each other; it was writ in Heaven. Kindred souls always end by meeting if only they wait patiently. I felt plainly, at your château of Sigognac, that I had met my fate. When I saw you, my heart, which no attentions had before touched, knew its master. Your shyness did more for you than other men's audacity, and from that moment I resolved I should belong either to you or to God."

"And yet, you wicked girl, you refused me your hand even when I begged for it on my knees! I know very well it was through self-sacrifice, but it was very cruel self-sacrifice."

"For which I shall make up to you to the best of my ability, dear Baron. Here is my hand; my heart you already have. The Countess de Lineuil is not

bound by the restraints that hemmed in dowerless Isabella. My only fear was that your pride would lead you to refuse me in your turn. But surely, had you done so, you would not have married any one else, would you? You would have remained faithful, even though hopelessly so? I was in your thoughts, was I not, when Vallombreuse went to find you out in your castle?"

"Dearest Isabella, I had not a thought by day that did not wing its flight to you; and at night, when I laid down my head upon the pillow yours had once touched, I besought the god of dreams to show me your lovely face in his magic mirror."

"And did he often grant your wish?"

"Never once did he fail to do so, and the dawn alone made you vanish through the ivory portals. The days seemed endless to me, and I wished I could have slept on for ever."

"I, too, have seen you in dreams many and many a night; our loving souls kept tryst in the same dreams. But, Heaven be thanked, we are reunited for many a day; for ever, I hope. The Prince, with whom Vallombreuse must have had an understanding — for my brother would not have heedlessly

induced you to take this step — will no doubt favourably entertain your request. He has repeatedly spoken of you to me in eulogious fashion, looking at me the while in a way that greatly disturbed me and which I dared not interpret, for Vallombreuse had not then declared that he felt no anger against you."

At this moment the young Duke returned, and informed Sigognac that the Prince was awaiting him. Sigognac rose, bowed to Isabella, and followed Vallombreuse through a number of rooms, at the end of which were the Prince's apartments. The old lord, dressed in black, and wearing his orders, was seated in a great arm-chair, near the window, behind a table covered with a Turkish rug and strewn with books and papers. His expression, although affable, was somewhat grave, like that of a man expecting an important visit. The light, as it fell in satiny sheen upon his brow, brought out like silver threads a few hairs that had escaped from the curls carefully arranged around his temples by his valet. His glance was kindly, firm, and clear; and time, which had robbed his face of part of its beauty by imprinting traces of its passage upon it, had compensated for this by adding majesty to the features. On seeing the Prince, even

when he did not wear the insignia of his rank, it was impossible not to experience a feeling of veneration, and the veriest and coarsest boor would have known him for a great lord. The Prince half rose from his chair, in answer to Sigognac's bow, and signed to him to sit down.

"My lord and father," said Vallombreuse, "I present to you Baron de Sigognac, formerly my rival, now my friend, and, if you are willing, my relative to be. It is to him that I owe my reformation, and that is no slight obligation. The Baron is here to respectfully request of you a favour which I should dearly love to have you grant him."

The Prince nodded assent, as if to encourage Sigognac to speak. The latter, thus emboldened, rose, bowed, and said: —

"Prince, I beg to ask for the hand of your daughter, the Lady Isabella, Countess de Lineuil."

The Prince remained silent for a moment, as if thinking the matter over, then he answered: —

"Baron de Sigognac, I grant your request, and I consent to the match, provided my daughter's feelings, which I do not wish to force in any way, concur with my own paternal desire. I shall not urge her, and it

is for the Countess de Lineuil to decide finally in this matter. We must hear what she says, for young women have strange fancies at times."

The Prince uttered these words with a courtier's slightly sarcastic tone and knowing smile, just as if he had not long been aware that Isabella loved Sigognac; but his dignity required that he should appear to be ignorant of the fact, even though he let it be understood that he was well acquainted with it. So, after a brief pause, he said: —

"Vallombreuse, fetch your sister, for I am really unable to give an answer to Baron de Sigognac unless she is present."

Vallombreuse disappeared and soon returned with Isabella, who was more dead than alive, for, in spite of her brother's assurances, she could not yet bring herself to believe in so great a happiness. Her bosom rose and fell, the colour had left her cheeks and her limbs scarcely supported her. The Prince drew her close to him, and she trembled so much that she was obliged, in order to keep from falling to the ground, to lean upon the arm of his chair.

"My daughter," said the Prince, "this gentleman does you the honour of asking your hand of me. It

would rejoice me to see you married to him, for he is of an old family, of unblemished reputation, and appears to me to combine every desirable qualification. As far as I am concerned, I fully approve of him, but the question is whether you do so. Young people do not always agree with graybeards. Question your own heart, and tell me whether you are willing to take Baron de Sigognac for your husband. Take your own time, for in so serious a matter, haste is most undesirable."

The Prince's cordial and kindly smile plainly proved that he was merely teasing, and Isabella, therefore, feeling emboldened, threw her arms around her father's neck and said, in a charmingly caressing way : —

"I need not spend much time in reflecting upon the matter. Since you approve of Baron de Sigognac, I will freely and frankly confess to you, my lord and father, that I have loved him since the day I first saw him, and that I have never wished to have any other husband than he. I am most happy to obey you."

"In that case, clasp hands and exchange a kiss in token of betrothal," said the Duke de Vallombreuse, gaily. "The novel ends more pleasantly than might

have been looked for from its troubled beginning. When is the wedding to be?"

"The tailors," said the Prince, "will need quite a week to cut and make up the dresses, and the coach-makers will need as much time to get the carriages ready. Meanwhile, Isabella, here is your dowry," he added, handing her a bundle of parchment. "It consists of the county of Lineuil, the name of which you bear, which brings in with its forests, ponds, meadows, and arable land, fifty thousand crowns a year. And as for you, Sigognac, here is a royal ordinance appointing you Governor of a province. No one better deserves it."

Vallombreuse a moment before had left the room, and now reappeared followed by a lackey carrying a casket in a red velvet case.

"Little sister," said he to the young bride, "here is your wedding-present."

He handed her the casket, on the cover of which were the words, "For Isabella." It was the casket he had once offered to the actress, and which she had very properly refused to accept.

"You will accept it now," he said, with an engaging smile, "and you will save these diamonds, of the first

water, and these pearls of the finest orient, from going to the bad. May they remain as pure as you."

Isabella smilingly took the necklace and fastened it on her neck, by way of proving to the splendid gems that she bore them no ill-will. She next slipped on her arm the triple row of pearls, and fastened the rich earrings to her ears.

There is little more to tell. At the end of the week, the chaplain of Vallombreuse married Isabella and Sigognac, — the groomsman of the latter being the Marquis de Bruyères, — in the castle chapel, which was a mass of flowers and ablaze with candles. Singers, brought by the young Duke, sang, with voices that seemed to come from heaven, and to return to it, a motet of Palestrina's. Sigognac was radiant; Isabella adorable under her long white veil, and never would it have been suspected, unless one had known her in the old days, that the lovely lady whose mien was at once so noble and modest and who looked like a princess of the blood, had performed in plays on the other side of the footlights. Sigognac, Governor of a province and Captain of the Musketeers, superbly dressed, was utterly unlike the unfortunate nobleman whose poverty was described at the beginning of this tale.

After a splendid meal, at which were present the Prince, Vallombreuse, the Marquis de Bruyères, the Chevalier de Vidalinc, the Marquis de l'Estang, and a few virtuous ladies, friends of the family, the wedded pair disappeared, and we leave them on the threshold of the nuptial chamber softly singing, "Hymen! O Hymen!" after the manner of the ancients.

XXII

THE CASTLE OF HAPPINESS

EPILOGUE

IT will readily be conceived that Isabella, now Baroness de Sigognac, had not forgotten, amid the grandeur in which she now lived, her good comrades who formed Herod's company. She could not invite them to her wedding on account of the difference in rank between them, but she had made gifts to every one of them with a grace so charming that it doubled their worth. Until the company took its departure, she frequently attended their performances, applauding at the right places, like the connoisseur she was, for the new Baroness did not even attempt to conceal the fact that she had been a strolling player; a capital way of preventing spiteful people from saying it, which they would not have failed to do had she sought to keep the fact secret. Besides, the illustrious station she occupied made people hold their tongues, and her modesty soon won all hearts to her, even the

hearts of the women, who agreed that there was no more highly bred lady at Court. King Louis XIII, having heard of Isabella's adventures, praised her highly for her virtue, and let it be seen that he held Sigognac in much esteem on account of the latter's self-control; for, being himself a chaste monarch, he had no liking for bold and licentious youth. Vallombreuse had greatly improved in his ways, thanks to the influence of his brother-in-law; a fact that greatly pleased the Prince.

So the young married pair lived very happily, each more than ever in love with the other, and free from that satiety of happiness that spoils the pleasantest of lives. For some time past, however, Isabella had seemed given over to the active prosecution of some secret purpose. She held private consultations with her steward; an architect called to see her and to submit plans to her; sculptors and painters had received orders from her and had started for an unknown destination. All this was done without Sigognac's knowledge, and with the assistance of Vallombreuse, who appeared to be in the secret.

One fine morning, some months later, — the time having no doubt been required for the carrying out of

her project, — Isabella said to Sigognac, just as if the thought had suddenly occurred to her: —

"My dear lord, do you ever think of your poor little castle of Sigognac? Do you not feel that you would like to revisit the cradle of our loves?"

"I am not so ungrateful as to forget it, and I have more than once thought of returning there, but I did not venture to propose the trip, not knowing whether you would care for it. I could never have taken on myself to drag you away from the delights of the Court, of which you are the fairest ornament, in order to hale you to my ruinous castle, the abode of rats and owls, but which I nevertheless prefer to the grandest palaces, for it is the ancient home of my ancestors, and the place where first I met you; a place for ever sacred to me and which I would willingly adorn with an altar."

"For my part," said Isabella, "I have often wondered whether the wild rose in the garden still bears blooms."

"I would swear it does," returned Sigognac. "Besides, as you once touched it, flowers it will always bear, even if for solitude's charm only."

"Unlike ordinary husbands," laughingly replied the Baroness de Sigognac, "you are more complimentary after marriage than before, and you make up madrigals for your wife as others would for their mistress. Since your wish accords with my fancy, what say you to starting this week? The season is lovely, the great heat is over, and we can make the trip comfortably. Vallombreuse will accompany us, and I shall take Chiquita, who will be glad to see her own countryside again."

The preparations did not take long, and the start was soon made. The trip was a quick and delightful one, Vallombreuse having taken care to provide relays of horses on the road; and in the course of a few days the party reached the spot where the road leading to the Sigognac place branched off from the main highway. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, and the sky was brilliant with light.

When the coach turned into the avenue and the castle suddenly came into view, Sigognac stared in amazement. He failed to recognise the places so familiar to him. The road had been mended and the ruts had vanished; the hedges were trimmed and allowed travellers to pass without scratching them with

their thorns; the trees, skilfully trimmed, cast correct shadows and within their arching boughs framed in a wonderful view.

Instead of the gloomy ruin, the description of which has perhaps not been forgotten, there now rose in the bright sunshine a brand-new castle, which bore the same likeness to the former one that a son does to his father. Yet there was no change in the form; the architectural lines were similar; the difference was that in the course of a few months it had grown younger by some centuries. The fallen stones had been reset in their places; the slender white turrets, topped with pretty slate roofs, with symmetrical patterns, stood up proudly, like feudal sentries, at the four corners of the castle, their gilded vanes showing in the bright azure. A roof, adorned with an elegant metal-work ridge ornament, had replaced the old broken-in roof with its leprous and mossy tiles. In the window sashes, the wooden boardings having been cleared away, glittered new panes set in lead fillets, in the shape of disks and diamonds. There was not a single crack visible upon the façade, which had been completely restored. Superb gates of oak, hung upon richly wrought iron hinges, closed the gateway formerly

unprotected by a pair of worm-eaten, weather-stained gates. On the keystone of the arch, amid lambrequins cleverly carved anew, gleamed the Sigognac coat of arms; on a field azure three storks argent, with the proud motto, formerly effaced and now plainly legible in gilt letters: *Alta petunt.*

Sigognac remained silent for a time, lost in the contemplation of the wonderful sight. Then he turned to Isabella and said: —

"You are the kind fairy to whom I am indebted for this transformation of my home. With a single touch of your wand you have restored to it splendour, beauty, and youth. I am most deeply grateful to you for this surprise; it is charming and lovely, as is everything you do. You guessed, without my having breathed it, the secret wish of my heart."

"You must thank also," said Isabella, pointing to Vallombreuse who sat in the corner of the carriage, "a certain enchanter who has been of the greatest assistance to me in all this business."

The Baron pressed the young Duke's hand.

While this conversation was going on, the coach had reached a court regularly laid out in front of the castle, from the ruddy brick chimneys of which rose into the

heavens great clouds of white smoke, testifying to the fact that distinguished guests were expected.

Peter, in a handsome new livery, was standing on the threshold, and threw the leaves of the door wide-open on the approach of the carriage, and the Baron, the Baroness, and the Duke alighted at the foot of the steps. Eight or ten lackeys, standing in double row upon the steps, bowed low to their new masters, whom they did not yet know.

Skilful artists had restored the vanished freshness of the frescoes on the walls. The Hercules in their cases supported the imitation cornice with an ease due to their muscles that swelled in true Florentine fashion. The Roman emperors swaggered in their more brilliant purple. The leaks of rain water no longer made geographical maps with their stains on the vaulting, and through the simulated trellis-work showed a cloudless sky.

Everywhere a similar metamorphosis had taken place. The wainscotting and the floors had been restored; new furniture, of the same style as the old, had taken the place of the latter. One's memories of the place were refreshed, not bewildered. The Flanders tapestry, with the duck-hunter, still hung on the walls of Sigo-

gnac's room, but its colours had been revived by careful cleansing. The bedstead was the same, but a patient wood-carver had stopped up the worm-holes, added to the small figures on the frieze the noses and fingers they had lost, touched up the worn ornaments, and restored to the old piece of furniture its original appearance. A white and green brocatelle, of the same pattern as the old one, hung in folds between the spiral pillars, which themselves were well waxed and polished.

Isabella, always thoughtful, had avoided indulging in inappropriate luxury, a danger when one has large means at one's command. She had desired to give pleasure to her husband, whom she loved tenderly, by bringing back to him the memories of his childhood, but freed from their wretchedness and their sadness. In the manor that had once been so gloomy everything now was bright. Even the portraits of his ancestors, cleansed of the dirt that had overlaid them, restored and newly varnished, smiled out of their gilded frames with a youthful air. The grumpy dowagers, the prudish canonesses no longer, as of yore, turned their noses up at Isabella, once an actress and now a Baroness; they welcomed her as one of the family.

In the court-yard there was no trace of nettles, hemlock, or other weeds that grow apace in damp, solitary, and neglected places. The paving-stones, pointed with cement, had lost the green edging which is a token of a deserted home. Through the well cleaned sashes of the rooms the doors of which were formerly closed up, could be seen curtains of rich stuffs, proving they were ready for the reception of guests.

They went down to the garden by steps, the stones of which, reset and freed from mosses, no longer gave way under the tread of the over-confiding. At the foot of the steps, carefully preserved, grew the wild rose that, on the morning of Sigognac's departure, had furnished a flower for the young actress. There was a single rose on it, which Isabella plucked and put into her bosom, welcoming it as a happy omen that her love would prove lasting.

The gardener had wrought to the full as hard as the architect, and thanks to his pruning, order had been restored in the virgin forest. Now no greedy branches barred the way, no sharp-thorned bramble stayed the steps, and a lady might pass on without having her dress torn; the trees once again formed arbours and arches; the clipped boxwood framed within the com-

partments they enclosed every flower known to Flora. At the foot of the garden, Pomona, cured of her leprosy, displayed her divine white nudity. A cleverly restored marble nose had given her back her Greek profile, and her basket held carved fruit and not poisonous toadstools, while from the lion's mouth there poured into the basin an abundance of limpid water. Climbing plants, covered with bell-like blooms of every hue, their tendrils clinging to a solid trellis painted green, picturesquely concealed the outer wall and imparted a pleasantly rustic air to the rockery that formed the niche of the statue. Never, even in their palmiest days, had the castle and the gardens been so richly and tastefully furnished forth. The glory of the Sigognacs, so long eclipsed, now shone resplendent.

Sigognac, walking amazed and delighted as in a dream, pressed Isabella's arm close to his breast, and was not ashamed of the tears of emotion that coursed down his cheeks.

"And now," said Isabella, "that we have seen everything, we must visit the lands which I have quietly caused to be bought up, in order to restore the old barony of Sigognac to its former extent, or nearly so. Allow me to put on my riding habit. I shall not

be long, for my former profession accustomed me to change my dress quickly. In the meantime, go and select the horses we shall ride, and have them saddled."

Vallombreuse carried off Sigognac, who found in the once deserted stables ten handsome horses in oaken stalls, furnished with straw litter. Their firm, polished quarters shone like satin, and on hearing the visitors the noble animals turned their intelligent gaze upon them. A sudden neigh made itself heard. It was good old Bayard who had recognised his master and was greeting him after the manner of his kind. The old servant, whom Isabella had been most careful to keep, had the warmest and most comfortable stall at the end of the row. His manger was filled with crushed oats, to save his old teeth, and between his legs dozed his old comrade Miraut, who got up and came to lick Sigognac's hand. The fact that Beelzebub had not yet shown up is not to be charged against his kind little feline heart, but to the prudent habits of his breed, habits that were greatly upset by the turmoil going on in a place once so still. Concealed in a garret, he was awaiting nightfall to make his appearance and pay his respects to his well-beloved master.

The Baron patted Bayard and then selected a handsome bay, which was at once led out of the stables; the Duke chose a Spanish jennet, with a fine head, worthy to carry an Infant, and for the Baroness a rich green velvet saddle was put on a lovely white palfrey, whose coat shone like silver. Isabella soon appeared, dressed in the neatest of riding costumes, that set off the beauty of her perfect figure. She wore a jacket of blue velvet, trimmed with silver buttons, frogs, and lace, with basque falling over a long pearl-gray satin skirt. For head-dress she had a man's white felt hat, shaded with a curled blue feather that fell down upon her neck. To prevent her golden hair being disarranged by the rapidity of the ride, she had bound it, with charming coquetry, with a blue net embroidered with silver beads.

Thus apparelled, Isabella was most charming, and the proudest beauties of the Court would have had to own themselves vanquished. Her cavalier dress brought out, along with the modest grace that ordinarily marked her, a touch of superiority that spoke of her illustrious birth. She was still Isabella, but at the same time a Prince's daughter, a Duke's sister, and the wife of a nobleman whose nobility antedated the

Crusades. Vallombreuse noticed it and could not help exclaiming: —

"How regal you look to-day, sister! Hippolyta herself, the Queen of the Amazons, assuredly had no prouder port or more victorious mien."

Isabella, assisted by Sigognac, sprang lightly into the saddle, the Duke and the Baron mounted their steeds, and the party rode out into the court outside the castle, where they met the Marquis de Bruyères and a number of noblemen living in the neighbourhood, who had come to pay their respects to the newly wedded pair. The latter proposed to return to the house, in obedience to the dictates of courtesy, but the visitors protested that it would be a pity to interrupt the ride just as their hosts were starting, and swung their horses round to accompany the young couple and the Duke de Vallombreuse.

The party, increased by five or six persons in gala dress, for the country gentry had donned their finest garments, had indeed a splendid and stately appearance; it was quite a princess's train. Riding along a well kept road, they went past green meadows, rich farms, and well managed woods, all of which belonged to Sigognac. The moors with their purple heather seemed to have retreated from the castle.

As the party happened to be passing through a fir copse on the limits of the barony, the baying of hounds was heard, and presently Yolande de Foix appeared, accompanied by her uncle the Commander and one or two gallants. The road was narrow, and the two companies rubbed against each other as they passed in opposite directions, although each tried to make room for the other. Yolande's horse reared and curveted, and her skirt flapped against Isabella's. She was flushed with anger and was evidently seeking for something insulting to say, but Isabella was above feminine vanity. The thought of taking her revenge for the appellation of "gipsy girl" which Yolande had cast at her in other days, almost at that very spot, did not even occur to her. She reflected that her triumph as a rival might wound, if not Yolande's heart, at least her pride, and she bowed to Mlle. de Foix in a dignified, modest, and graceful manner; the latter was thus compelled, much as it went against the grain with her to do so, to reply with a slight inclination of her head. Baron de Sigognac bowed to her in the quietest and most unconcerned way, though very respectfully, nor could Yolande detect in the eyes of her former adorer a single flash of his former flame. She

lashed her horse and galloped off with her small company.

"By Venus and Cupid!" said Vallombreuse gaily to the Marquis de Bruyères, by whose side he was riding, "that is a handsome girl, but she looks devilishly fierce and ill-tempered. Did you see the way she looked at my sister? She seemed to be trying to stab her with her glances."

"When a girl has been the toast of the countryside," replied the Marquis, "she does not particularly fancy being dethroned, and the victory unquestionably rests with her ladyship de Sigognac."

The cavalcade returned to the castle. A sumptuous repast was served in the hall where of yore the Baron had entertained the players at supper with their own provisions, there being nothing in his larder. The guests were delighted with the excellence of the fare provided. Rich silver plate, bearing the Sigognac arms, gleamed on the damasked table-cloth, the pattern on which exhibited, among other designs, heraldic storks. The few pieces of the old service which were not wholly unfit for use had been religiously preserved and placed among the newer ones, so that the latter might not have too modern an air of luxury, and the ancient

Sigognac might contribute its share to the splendours of the new.

The company sat down to table, Isabella in the same place she had occupied on that famous evening which had changed the Baron's fate. Both she and Sigognac thought of it, and the pair exchanged a lover's smile, full of tender remembrance and bright hopes.

Near the side table where the carving-equerry carved the joints, stood a man of athletic build, with a big pale face, fringed with a brown beard; he was dressed in black velvet, and wore round his neck a silver chain. From time to time he gave orders to the servants with a most majestic air. Near a dresser, laden with bottles, some pot-bellied, some long-necked, others protected by platted work, according to the nature of the contents, moved with much activity, in spite of his senile, trembling limbs, a queer-looking figure, with a Rabelaisian nose covered with grog-blossoms, cheeks illumined with the juice of the grape, and little sharp, greenish eyes surmounted by eyebrows in the form of circumflex accents. Sigognac, happening to look that way, recognised the former as being the tragic Herod, and the latter as the grotesque Blazius. Isabella, observing that he had remarked their presence, whis-

pered to him that in order to save these poor people from the wretched life of strolling players, she had appointed the one majordomo, and the other cellarer of Sigognac, easy situations that did not call for much work from them, — a course the Baron fully approved.

The meal was proceeding, and the bottles, promptly replaced by Blazius, were following each other uninterruptedly, when Sigognac felt a head pressing against his knee and sharp claws performing a well remembered tattoo upon the other. It was Miraut and Beelzebub, who, profiting by the fact that a door had been left open, had slipped into the hall and, notwithstanding the fear inspired in their breasts by the numerous and brilliant company, had come to claim their share of the feast. Nor did Sigognac, now wealthy, repel these humble friends of his days of poverty. He patted Miraut and scratched Beelzebub's cropped ears, distributing to them an abundant share of tit-bits. The crumbs from his table on this occasion were morsels of pastry, pieces of partridge, bits of fish, and other succulent food. Beelzebub was happy beyond expression, and scratched away, calling for still another morsel, without ever tiring out Sigognac's patience, for the cat's voracity amused him. At last, swelled

out like a barrel, walking with his legs apart, and scarcely able to purr, the old black cat withdrew to the room hung with the Flanders tapestry and curled himself up like a ball in his accustomed place to digest his bountiful repast.

Vallombreuse drank bumper for bumper with the Marquis de Bruyères, and the gentry did not tire of drinking the health of the wedded pair in glasses equally well filled; Sigognac, sober by temperament and habit, acknowledging the pledges by touching his lips to his glass, which was always full since he never drained it. At last the gentry, their heads pretty well fuddled, rose staggering from table and reached, not without requiring the assistance of the lackeys, the rooms that had been prepared for them.

Isabella, under the pretext of fatigue, had withdrawn at dessert. Chiquita, promoted to the post of lady's maid, had undressed her and robed her for the night with the silent activity characteristic of her way of serving. Chiquita was now a handsome girl: her complexion, no longer tanned by wind and weather, had cleared, though it still preserved the healthy and rich pallor so much admired by artists. Her hair, which had become acquainted with the uses of the

comb, was neatly fastened with a red ribbon the ends of which fell down behind. She still wore the pearl necklace Isabella had given her; in the mind of the strange girl it was the symbol of her voluntary servitude, the pledge of a bond death alone could break. Her dress was black; she was in mourning for her one and only love, and her mistress had not objected to this fancy of hers. Chiquita, having nothing more to do, withdrew after kissing Isabella's hand, as she never failed to do night after night.

When Sigognac entered the room where he had spent so many a dull and lonely night, listening to the passing of the minutes that seemed to be hours, and to the weird moaning of the wind behind the arras, he saw, in the light shed by the Chinese lamp suspended from the ceiling, Isabella's lovely head bending towards him with a chaste and enchanting smile from between the curtains of green and white brocatelle. It was the full realisation of his dream of the days when he used to gaze at the empty bed with deep melancholy, for he then believed himself parted hopelessly and for ever from Isabella. There could be no doubt that Fate was behaving most handsomely to him.

Towards morning, Beelzebub, a prey to a strange

excitement, left the arm-chair on which he had spent the night, and with difficulty made his way on to the bed. Once up, he pushed his nose into his sleeping master's hand, and tried to purr, though the sound more resembled a death-rattle. Sigognac woke up and saw Beelzebub staring at him as if begging for human help, his great green eyes, glazed and already half dead, larger than ever they had been. His coat had lost its shiny look and was wet with the sweat of agony; he trembled all over and made desperate efforts to keep up upon his legs. His whole appearance indicated that he beheld something terrible. At last he fell on his side, his frame shook convulsively a few times, he uttered a sob like a child having its throat cut, and stiffened out just as though invisible hands had stretched out his limbs. He was dead.

His dying cry had wakened Isabella.

"Poor Beelzebub," she said, as she saw the dead animal. "He had borne with the poverty of Sigognac, and is not to know it in prosperity."

It must be confessed that Beelzebub was the victim of his own intemperance; indigestion had finished him, his starved stomach not being accustomed to such plethora.

Sigognac was much more moved by his death than might have been thought. He was not of opinion that animals were mere machines, and he believed they had souls, inferior no doubt to the souls of men, but susceptible nevertheless of intelligence and feeling. This, indeed, is the opinion of all who, having long lived alone with a dog, a cat, or other animal, have had opportunities of observing them and entering into relations with them. So it was that with moist eyes and a sad heart he wrapped up poor Beelzebub in a piece of cloth in order to bury him that night, — an action which might well have appeared ridiculous and sacrilegious to the vulgar.

When night had fallen Sigognac took a spade, a lantern, and the dead body of Beelzebub, stiff in its silken shroud. He went down to the garden, and began digging a hole at the foot of the wild-rose bush, by the light of the lantern, whose beams attracted the moths that beat the horn panes with their dusty wings. It was very dark. The moon showed faintly through an inky cloud, and the scene was more solemn than became the funeral of a cat. Sigognac dug deep, for he meant to bury his little friend so far down that wild beasts should not tear him up. Suddenly the iron

of the spade struck fire as if it had hit a flint. The Baron thought it was a stone and dug harder, but the blows sounded strangely and the work was not getting on. Then Sigognac took up the lantern to see what was in the way, and to his surprise beheld the top of a coffer of oak, bound with heavy iron bands, much rusted, but still strong. He freed the box by digging around it, and using the spade as a lever, he managed to raise the mysterious coffer, in spite of its great weight, up to the top of the hole and slide it on to the hard ground. Then he placed Beelzebub in the empty space where the box had lain, and filled up the grave.

Having finished this job, he tried to carry his find to the castle, but the burden was too heavy for one man to handle, vigorous though he might be, and Sigognac therefore went in search of the faithful Peter to help him. The servant and the master each took hold of one of the handles of the box and carried it to the castle, bending under the weight.

Peter smashed the lock with an axe, and as the cover came off it revealed a considerable quantity of gold pieces: ounces, quadruples, sequins, Genoa pieces, Portuguese moneys, ducats, crosses, angels, and other

coins of various denominations and countries, but none modern.

Old jewellery, enriched with gems, was mingled with the coins. At the bottom of the box, when they had emptied it, Sigognac found a parchment sealed with the Sigognac arms, the writing on which had faded with the damp. The signature alone was still fairly legible, and the Baron made out the words: "Raymond de Sigognac." It was the name of an ancestor of his who had gone off to the wars and had never returned, — the mystery of his death or disappearance never having been solved. He had left behind a son of tender years; and on the point of starting upon a dangerous expedition, he had buried his treasure, intrusting the secret of its location to a trusty man who had no doubt been surprised by death before he could reveal to the rightful heir the place where the money was concealed. It was from the departure of that particular Raymond that the decadence of the house of Sigognac, formerly rich and powerful, had dated. Such, at least, was the not improbable way in which the Baron, founding himself upon these slight premises, accounted for the find. What was quite clear was that the treasure belonged to him. He sent for Isabella, and showed her the heap of gold.

"There can be no denying," said the Baron, "that Beelzebub was the good genius of the Sigognacs. He makes me wealthy by his death, and leaves me only when the angel has come to me. His task was done, since you had brought me happiness."

My Private Menagerie

MY PRIVATE MENAGERIE

I

ANTIQUITY

I HAVE often been caricatured in Turkish dress seated upon cushions, and surrounded by cats so familiar that they did not hesitate to climb upon my shoulders and even upon my head. The caricature is truth slightly exaggerated, and I must own that all my life I have been as fond of animals in general and of cats in particular as any brahmin or old maid. The great Byron always trotted a menagerie round with him, even when travelling, and he caused to be erected, in the park of Newstead Abbey, a monument to his faithful Newfoundland dog Boatswain, with an inscription in verse of his own inditing. I cannot be accused of imitation in the matter of our common liking for dogs, for that love manifested itself

in me at an age when I was yet ignorant of the alphabet.

A clever man being at this time engaged in preparing a "History of Animals of Letters," I jot down these notes in which he may find, so far as my own animals are concerned, trustworthy information.

The earliest remembrance of this sort that I have goes back to the time of my arrival in Paris from Tarbes. I was then three years old, so that it is difficult to credit the statement made by Mirecourt and Vapereau, who affirm that I "proved but an indifferent pupil" in my native town. Home-sickness of a violence that no one would credit a child with being capable of experiencing, fell upon me. I spoke our local dialect only, and people who talked French "were not mine own people." I would wake in the middle of the night and inquire whether we were not soon to start on our return to our own land.

No dainty tempted me, no toy could amuse me. Drums and trumpets equally failed to relieve my gloom. Among the objects and beings I regretted figured a dog called Cagnotte, whom it had been found impossible to bring with us. His absence told on me to such an extent that one morning, having first chucked out of

the window my little tin soldiers, my German village with its painted houses, and my bright red fiddle, I was about to take the same road to return as speedily as possible to Tarbes, the Gascons, and Cagnotte. I was grabbed by the jacket in the nick of time, and Josephine, my nurse, had the happy thought to tell me that Cagnotte, tired of waiting for us, was coming that very day by the stage-coach. Children accept the improbable with artless faith; nothing strikes them as impossible; only, they must not be deceived, for there is no impairing the fixity of a settled idea in their brains. I kept asking, every fifteen minutes, whether Cagnotte had not yet come. To quiet me, Josephine bought on the Pont-Neuf a little dog not unlike the Tarbes specimen. I did not feel sure of its identity, but I was told that travelling changed dogs very much. I was satisfied with the explanation and accepted the Pont-Neuf dog as being the authentic Cagnotte. He was very gentle, very amiable, and very well behaved. He would lick my cheeks, and indeed his tongue was not above licking also the slices of bread and butter cut for my afternoon tea. We lived on the best of terms with each other.

Presently, however, the supposed Cagnotte became

sad, troubled, and his movements lost their freedom. He found it difficult to curl himself up, lost his jolly agility, breathed hard and could not eat. One day, while caressing him, I felt a seam that ran down his stomach, which was much swelled and very tight. I called my nurse. She came, took a pair of scissors cut the thread, and Cagnotte, freed of a sort of overcoat made of curled lambskin, in which he had been tricked out by the Pont-Neuf dealers to make him look like a poodle, appeared in all the wretched guise and ugliness of a street cur, a worthless mongrel. He had grown fat, and his scant garment was choking him. Once he was rid of his carapace, he wagged his ears, stretched his limbs, and started romping joyously round the room, caring nothing about being ugly so long as he was comfortable. His appetite returned, and he made up by his moral qualities for his lack of beauty. In Cagnotte's company I gradually lost, for he was a genuine child of Paris, my remembrance of Tarbes and of the high mountains visible from our windows; I learned French and I also became a thorough-paced Parisian.

The reader is not to suppose that this is a story I have invented for the sole purpose of entertaining

him. It is literally true, and proves that the dog-dealers of that day were quite as clever as horse-coupers in the art of making up their animals and taking in purchasers.

After Cagnotte's death, my liking was rather for cats, on account of their being more sedentary and fonder of the fireplace. I shall not attempt to relate their history in detail. Dynasties of felines, as numerous as the dynasties of Egyptian kings, succeeded each other in our home. Accident, flight, or death accounted for them in turns. They were all beloved and regretted; but life is made up of forgetfulness, and the remembrance of cats passes away like the remembrance of men.

It is a sad thing that the life of these humble friends, of these inferior brethren, should not be proportionate to that of their masters.

I shall do no more than mention an old gray cat that used to side with me against my parents, and bit my mother's ankles when she scolded me or seemed about to punish me, and come at once to Childebrand, a cat of the Romanticist period. The name suffices to let my reader understand the secret desire I felt to run counter to Boileau, whom I disliked then, but

with whom I have since made my peace. It will be remembered that Nicolas says: —

> "Oh! ridiculous notion of poet ignorant
> Who, of so many heroes, chooses Childebrand!"

It seemed to me that the man was not so ignorant after all, since he had selected a hero no one knew anything of; and, besides, Childebrand struck me as a most long-haired, Merovingian, mediæval, and Gothic name, immeasurably preferable to any Greek name, such as Agamemnon, Achilles, Idomeneus, Ulysses, or others of that sort. These were the ways of our day, so far as the young fellows were concerned, at least: for never, to quote the expression that occurs in the account of Kaulbach's frescoes on the outer walls of the Pinacothek at Munich, never did the hydra of "wiggery" (*perruquinisme*) erect its heads more fiercely, and no doubt the Classicists called their cats Hector, Patrocles, or Ajax.

Childebrand was a splendid gutter-cat, short-haired, striped black and tan, like the trunks worn by Saltabadil in "le Roi s'amuse." His great green eyes with their almond-shaped pupils, and his regular velvet stripes, gave him a distant tigerish look that I liked. "Cats

are the tigers of poor devils," I once wrote. Childebrand enjoyed the honour of entering into some verses of mine, again because I wanted to tease Boileau : —

" Then shall I describe to you that picture by Rembrandt, that pleased me so much; and my cat Childebrand, as is his habit, on my knees resting, and anxiously up at me gazing, shall follow the motions of my finger as in the air it sketches the story to make it clear."

Childebrand came in well by way of a rime to Rembrandt, for the verses were meant for a Romanticist profession of faith addressed to a friend, since deceased, and in those days as enthusiastic an admirer of Victor Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, and Alfred de Musset as I was.

I am compelled to say of my cats what Don Ruy Gomez de Silva said to Don Carlos, when the latter became impatient at the enumeration of the former's ancestors, beginning with Don Silvius " who thrice was Consul of Rome," that is, " I pass over a number, and of the greatest," and I shall come to Madame-Théophile, a red cat with white breast, pink nose, and blue eyes, so called because she lived with me on a footing of conjugal intimacy. She slept on the foot of my bed, snoozed on the arm of my chair while I was writing, came down to the garden and accompanied me

on my walks, sat at meals with me and not infrequently appropriated the morsels on their way from my plate to my mouth.

One day a friend of mine, who was going out of town for a few days, intrusted his parrot to me with the request that I would take care of it during his absence. The bird, feeling strange in my house, had climbed, helping himself with his beak, to the very top of his perch, and looking pretty well bewildered, rolled round his eyes, that resembled the gilt nails on arm-chairs, and wrinkled the whitish membrane that served him for eyelids. Madame-Théophile had never seen a parrot, and she was evidently much puzzled by the strange bird. Motionless as an Egyptian mummy cat in its net-work of bands, she gazed upon it with an air of profound meditation, and put together whatever she had been able to pick up of natural history on the roofs, the yard, and the garden. Her thoughts were reflected in her shifting glance, and I was able to read in it the result of her examination: "It is unmistakably a chicken."

Having reached this conclusion, she sprang from the table on which she had posted herself to make her investigations, and crouched down in one corner of the

room, flat on her stomach, her elbows out, her head low, her muscular backbone on the stretch, like the black panther in Gérome's painting, watching gazelles on their way to the drinking-place.

The parrot followed her movements with feverish anxiety, fluffing out its feathers, rattling its chain, lifting its foot, and moving its claws, and sharpening its beak upon the edge of its seed-box. Its instinct warned it that an enemy was preparing to attack it.

The eyes of the cat, fixed upon the bird with an intensity that had something of fascination in it, plainly said in a language well understood of the parrot and absolutely intelligible: "Green though it is, that chicken must be good to eat."

I watched the scene with much interest, prepared to interfere at the proper time. Madame-Théophile had gradually crawled nearer; her pink nose was working, her eyes were half closed, her claws were protruded and then drawn in. She thrilled with anticipation like a gourmet sitting down to enjoy a truffled pullet; she gloated over the thought of the choice and succulent meal she was about to enjoy, and her sensuality was tickled by the idea of the exotic dish that was to be hers.

Suddenly she arched her back like a bow that is being drawn, and a swift leap landed her right on the perch. The parrot, seeing the danger upon him, unexpectedly called out in a deep, sonorous bass voice: "Have you had your breakfast, Jack?"

The words filled the cat with indescribable terror; and she leapt back. The blast of a trumpet, the smash of a pile of crockery, or a pistol-shot fired by her ear would not have dismayed the feline to such an extent. All her ornithological notions were upset.

"And what did you have? — A royal roast," went on the bird.

The cat's expression clearly meant: "This is not a bird; it 's a man; it speaks."

> "When of claret I 've drunk my fill,
> The pot-house whirls and is whirling still,"

sang out the bird with a deafening voice, for it had at once perceived that the terror inspired by its speech was its surest means of defence.

The cat looked at me questioningly, and my reply proving unsatisfactory, she sneaked under the bed, and refused to come out for the rest of the day.

Those of my readers who have not been in the habit

of having animals to keep them company, and who see in them, as did Descartes, merely machines, will no doubt think I am attributing intentions to the bird and the quadruped, but as a matter of fact, I have merely translated their thoughts into human speech. The next day, Madame-Théophile, having somewhat overcome her fright, made another attempt, and was routed in the same fashion. That was enough for her, and henceforth she remained convinced that the bird was a man.

This dainty and lovely creature adored perfumes. She would go into ecstasies on breathing in the patchouli and vetiver used for Cashmere shawls. She had also a taste for music. Nestling upon a pile of scores, she would listen most attentively and with every mark of satisfaction to the singers who came to perform at the critic's piano. But high notes made her nervous, and she never failed to close the singer's mouth with her paw if the lady sang the high A. We used to try the experiment for the fun of the thing, and it never failed once. It was quite impossible to fool my dilettante cat on that note.

II

THE WHITE DYNASTY

LET me come to more recent times. A cat brought from Havana by Mlle. Aïta de la Penuela, a young Spanish artist whose studies of white angora cats used to adorn and still adorn the show-windows of the print-sellers, gave birth to the daintiest little kitten, exactly like the puffs used for the application of face powder, which kitten was presented to me. Its immaculate whiteness caused it to be named Pierrot, and this appellation, when it grew up, developed into Don Pierrot of Navarre, which was infinitely more majestic and smacked of a grandee of Spain.

Don Pierrot, like all animals that are fondled and petted, became delightfully amiable, and shared the life of the household with that fulness of satisfaction cats derive from close association with the fireside. Seated in his customary place, close to the fire, he really looked as if he understood the conversation and was interested

in it. He followed the speakers with his eyes, and every now and then would utter a little cry, exactly as if to object and give his own opinion upon literature, which formed the staple of our talks. He was very fond of books, and when he found one open on the table, he would lie down by it, gaze attentively at the page and turn the leaves with his claws; then he ended by going to sleep, just as if he had really been reading a fashionable novel. As soon as I picked up my pen, he would leap upon the desk, and watch attentively the steel nib scribbling away on the paper, moving his head every time I began a new line. Sometimes he endeavoured to collaborate with me, and would snatch the pen out of my hand, no doubt with the intention of writing in his turn, for he was as æsthetic a cat as Hoffmann's Murr. Indeed, I strongly suspect that he was in the habit of inditing his memoirs, at night, in some gutter or another, by the light of his own phosphorescent eyes. Unfortunately, these lucubrations are lost.

Don Pierrot of Navarre always sat up at night until I came home, waiting for me on the inside of the door, and as soon as I stepped into the antechamber he would come rubbing himself against my legs, arching

his back and purring in gladsome, friendly fashion. Then he would start to walk in front of me, preceding me like a page, and I am sure that if I had asked him to do so, he would have carried my candle. In this way he would escort me to my bedroom, wait until I had undressed, jump up on the bed, put his paws round my neck, rub his nose against mine, lick me with his tiny red tongue, rough as a file, and utter little inarticulate cries by way of expressing unmistakably the pleasure he felt at seeing me again. When he had sufficiently caressed me and it was time to sleep he used to perch upon the backboard of his bed and slept there like a bird roosting on a branch. As soon as I woke in the morning, he would come and stretch out beside me until I rose.

Midnight was the latest time allowed for my return home. On this point Pierrot was as inflexible as a janitor. Now, at that time I had founded, along with a few friends, a little evening reunion called "The Four Candles Society," the place of meeting happening to be lighted by four candles stuck in silver candlesticks placed at each corner of the table. Occasionally the conversation became so absorbing that I would forget the time, even at the risk of seeing, like Cin-

derella, my carriage turn into a pumpkin and my coachman into a big rat. Twice or thrice Pierrot sat up for me until two o'clock in the morning, but presently he took offence at my conduct and went to bed without waiting for me. I was touched by this mute protest against my innocently disorderly way of life, and thereafter I regularly returned home at midnight. Pierrot, however, proved hard to win back; he wanted to make sure that my repentance was no mere passing matter, but once he was convinced that I had really reformed, he deigned to restore me to his good graces and again took up his nightly post in the antechamber.

It is no easy matter to win a cat's love, for cats are philosophical, sedate, quiet animals, fond of their own way, liking cleanliness and order, and not apt to bestow their affection hastily. They are quite willing to be friends, if you prove worthy of their friendship, but they decline to be slaves. They are affectionate, but they exercise free will, and will not do for you what they consider to be unreasonable. Once, however, they have bestowed their friendship, their trust is absolute, and their affection most faithful. They become one's companions in hours of solitude, sadness, and labour. A cat will stay on your knees a whole evening,

purring away, happy in your company and careless of that of its own species. In vain do mewings sound on the roofs, inviting it to one of the cat parties where red herring brine takes the place of tea; it is not to be tempted and spends the evening with you. If you put it down, it is back in a jiffy with a kind of cooing that sounds like a gentle reproach. Sometimes, sitting up in front of you, it looks at you so softly, so tenderly, so caressingly, and in so human a way that it is almost terrifying, for it is impossible to believe that there is no mind back of those eyes.

Don Pierrot of Navarre had a mate of the same breed just as white as himself. All the expressions I have accumulated in the "Symphony in White Major" for the purpose of rendering the idea of snowy whiteness would be insufficient to give an idea of the immaculate coat of my cat, by the side of which the ermine's fur would have looked yellow. I called her Séraphita, after Balzac's Swedenborgian novel. Never did the heroine of that wondrous legend, when ascending with Minna the snow-covered summits of the Falberg, gleam more purely white. Séraphita was of a dreamy and contemplative disposition. She would remain for hours on a cushion, wide-awake and follow-

ing with her eyes, with intensest attention, sights invisible to ordinary mortals. She liked to be petted, but returned caresses in a very reserved way, and only in the case of persons whom she honoured with her approbation, a most difficult thing to obtain. She was fond of luxury, and we were always sure to find her curled up in the newest arm-chair or on the piece of stuff that best set off her swan's-down coat. She spent endless time at her toilet; every morning she carefully smoothed out her fur. She used her paws to wash herself, and every single hair of her fur, having been brushed out with her rosy tongue, shone like brand-new silver. If any one touched her, she at once removed the traces of the touch, for she could not bear to be rumpled. Her elegance and stylishness suggested that she was an aristocrat, and among her own kind she must have been a duchess at the very least. She delighted in perfumes, stuck her little nose into bouquets, and bit with little spasms of pleasure at handkerchiefs on which scent had been put; she walked upon the dressing-table among the scent-bottles, smelling the stoppers, and if she had been allowed to do so would no doubt have used powder. Such was Séraphita, and never did a cat bear a poetic name more worthily.

At about this time a couple of those sham sailors who sell striped rugs, handkerchiefs of pine-apple fibre and other exotic products, happened to pass through the Rue de Longchamps, where I was living. They had in a little cage a pair of white Norway rats with red eyes, as pretty as pretty could be. Just then I had a fancy for white creatures, and my hen-run was inhabited by white fowls only. I bought the two rats, and a big cage was built for them, with inner stairs leading to the different stories, eating-places, bedrooms, and trapezes for gymnastics. They were unquestionably happier and better off there than La Fontaine's rat in his Dutch cheese.

The gentle creatures, which, I really do not know why, inspire puerile repulsion, became astonishingly tame as soon as they found out that no harm was intended them. They allowed themselves to be petted just like cats, and would catch my finger in their ideally delicate little rosy hands, and lick it in the friendliest way. They used to be let out at the end of our meals, and would clamber up the arms, the shoulders, and the heads of the guests, emerging from the sleeves of coats and dressing-gowns with marvellous skill and agility. All these performances, carried out very

prettily, were intended to secure permission to forage among the remains of the dessert. They were then placed on the table, and in a twinkling the male and female had put away the nuts, filberts, raisins, and lumps of sugar. It was most amusing to watch their quick, eager ways, and their astonishment when they reached the edge of the table. Then, however, we would hold out to them a strip of wood reaching to their cage, and they stored away their gains in their pantry.

The pair multiplied rapidly, and numerous families, as white as their progenitors, ran up and down the little ladders in the cage, so that ere long I found myself the owner of some thirty rats so very tame that when the weather was cold they were in the habit of nestling in my pockets in order to keep warm, and remained there perfectly still. Sometimes I used to have the doors of my City of Rats thrown open, and, after having ascended to the topmost story of my house, I whistled in a way very familiar to my pets. Then the rats, which find it difficult to ascend steps, climbed up the balusters, got on to the rail, and proceeding in Indian file while keeping their equilibrium like acrobats, ascended that narrow road not infrequently descended astride by schoolboys, and came to

me uttering little squeaks and manifesting the liveliest joy. And now I must confess to a piece of stupidity on my part. I had so often been told that a rat's tail looked like a red worm and spoiled the creature's pretty looks, that I selected one of the younger generation and cut off the much criticised caudal appendage with a red-hot shovel. The little rat bore the operation very well, grew apace, and became an imposing fellow with mustaches. But though he was the lighter for the loss of his tail, he was much less agile than his comrades; he was very careful about trying gymnastics and fell very often. He always brought up the rear when the company ascended the balusters, and looked like a tight-rope dancer trying to do without a balancing-pole. Then I understood the usefulness of a tail in the case of rats: it aids them to maintain their equilibrium when scampering along cornices and narrow ledges. They swing it to the right or the left by way of counterpoise when they lean over to the one side or the other; hence the constant switching which appears so causeless. When one observes Nature carefully, one readily comes to the conclusion that she does nothing that is unnecessary, and that one ought to be very careful in attempting to improve upon her.

No doubt my reader wonders how cats and rats, two races so hostile to each other, and the one of which is the prey of the other, can manage to live together. The fact is that mine got on wonderfully harmoniously together. The cats were good as gold to the rats, which had lost all fear of them. The felines were never perfidious, and the rats never had to mourn the loss of a single comrade. Don Pierrot of Navarre was uncommonly fond of them ; he would lie down by their cage and spend hours watching them at play. When by chance the door of the room was closed, he would scratch and miaoul gently until it was opened and he could join his little white friends, which often came and slept by him. Séraphita, who was more stand-off and who disliked the strong odour of musk given out by the rats, did not take part in their sports, but she never harmed them, and allowed them to pass quietly in front of her without ever unsheathing her claws.

The end of these rats was strange. One heavy, stormy summer's day, when the mercury was nearly up to a hundred degrees, their cage had been put in the garden, in an arbour covered with creepers, as they seemed to feel the heat greatly. The storm burst with

lightnings, rain, thunder, and squalls of wind. The tall poplars on the river bank bent like reeds. Armed with an umbrella, which the wind turned inside out, I was just starting to fetch in my rats, when a dazzling flash of lightning, which seemed to tear open the very depths of heaven, stopped me on the uppermost of the steps leading from the terrace to the garden.

A terrific thunder-clap, louder than the report of a hundred guns, followed almost instantaneously upon the flash, and the shock was so violent that I was nearly thrown to the ground.

The storm passed away shortly after that frightful explosion, but, on reaching the arbour, I found the thirty-two rats, toes up, killed by the one and same stroke of lightning. No doubt the iron wires of their cage had attracted the electric fluid and acted as a conductor.

Thus died together, as they had lived, the thirty-two Norway rats, — an enviable death, not often vouchsafed by fate!

III

THE BLACK DYNASTY

DON PIERROT of Navarre, being a native of Havana, required a hot-house temperature, and he enjoyed it in the house; round the dwelling, however, stretched great gardens, separated by open fences through which a cat could easily make its way, and rose great trees in which twittered, warbled, and sang whole flocks of birds; so that sometimes Pierrot, profiting by a door left open, would go out at night and start on a hunt, rambling through the grass and flowers wet with dew. In such cases he would have to await daylight to be let in, for although he would come and miaoul under our windows, his appeals did not always awaken the sleepers in the house. He had a delicate chest, and one night, when it was colder than usual, he caught a cold which soon turned into consumption. After coughing for a whole year poor Pierrot became thin and emaciated, and his coat, formerly so silky, had the mat whiteness of a

shroud. His great transparent eyes had become the most important feature in his poor shrunken face; his red nose had turned pale, and he walked with slow steps, in a melancholy fashion, by the sunny side of the wall, watching the yellow autumn leaves whirling and twisting. One could have sworn he was reciting to himself Millevoye's elegy. A sick animal is a very touching object, for it bears suffering with such gentle and sad resignation. We did all we could to save him; I called in a very skilful physician who tested his chest and felt his pulse. Ass's milk was prescribed, and the poor little creature drank it willingly enough out of his tiny china saucer. He would remain for hours at a time stretched out on my knee like the shadow of a sphinx; I could feel his vertebræ like the grains of a chaplet, and he would try to acknowledge my caresses with a feeble purr that sounded like a death-rattle. On the day he died, he lay on his side gasping, but got himself up by a supreme effort, came to me, and opening wide his eyes, fixed upon me a glance that called for help with intense supplication. He seemed to say to me, "You are a man; do save me." Then he staggered, his eyes already glazed, and fell to the ground, uttering so woeful, so despair-

ing, so anguished a cry that it filled me with mute horror. He was buried at the foot of the garden, under a white rosebush that still marks the place of his tomb.

Séraphita died two or three years later, of croup, which the physician was unable to master. She rests not far from Pierrot.

With her ended the White Dynasty, but not the family. From that pair of snow-white cats had sprung three coal-black kittens, a mystery the solution of which I leave to others. Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables" were then all the rage, and the names of the characters in the novel were in every one's mouth. The two little male cats were called Enjolras and Gavroche, and the female Eponine. They were the sweetest of kittens, and we trained them to fetch and carry pieces of paper thrown at a distance just as a dog would do. We got so far as to throw the paper ball on the top of wardrobes, or to hide it behind boxes or in tall vases, and they would retrieve it very prettily with their paws. On attaining years of discretion, they forsook these frivolous sports and resumed the dreamy, philosophical calm which is the real characteristic of cats.

All negroes are alike to people who land in a slave-owning country in America, and it is impossible for them to tell one from another. So, to those who do not care for them, three black cats are three black cats and nothing more. But an observing eye makes no such mistake. The physiognomies of animals are as different as those of men, and I could always tell to which particular cat belonged the black face, as black as Harlequin's mask, and lighted by emerald disks with golden gleams.

Enjolras, who was by far the handsomest of the three, was marked by his big lion-like head and well whiskered cheeks, by his muscular shoulders, his long back, and his splendid tail, fluffy as a feather duster. There was something theatrical and grandiloquent about him, and he seemed to pose like an actor who attracts admiration. His motions were slow, undulating, and full of majesty; he seemed to be always stepping on a table covered with china ornaments and Venetian glass, so circumspectly did he select the place where he put down his foot. He was not much of a Stoic, and exhibited a liking for food which his namesake would have had reason to blame. No doubt Enjolras, the pure and sober youth, would have said to

him, as the angel did to Swedenborg, "You eat too much." We rather encouraged this amusing voracity, analogous to that of monkeys, and Enjolras grew to a size and weight very uncommon among domestic cats. Then I bethought myself of having him shaved in the style of poodles, in order to bring out completely his leonine appearance. He retained his mane and a long tuft of hair at the end of the tail, and I would not swear that his thighs were not adorned with mutton-chop whiskers like those Munito used to wear. Thus trimmed, he resembled, I must confess, a Japanese monster much more than a lion of the Atlas Mountains or the Cape. Never was a more extravagant fancy carried out on the body of a living animal; his closely clipped coat allowed the skin to show through, and its bluish tones, most curious to note, contrasted strangely with his black mane.

Gavroche was a cat with a sharp, satirical look, as if he intended to recall his namesake in the novel. Smaller than Enjolras, he was endowed with abrupt and comical agility, and in the stead of the puns and slang of the Paris street-Arab, he indulged in the funniest capers, leaps, and attitudes. I am bound to add that, yielding to his street instincts, Gavroche was in

the habit of seizing every opportunity of leaving the drawing-room and going off to join, in the court, and even in the public streets, numbers of wandering cats, "of unknown blood and lineage low," with whom he took part in performances of doubtful taste, completely forgetful of his dignified rank as a Havana cat, the son of the illustrious Don Pierrot of Navarre, a grandee of Spain of the first class, and of the Marchioness Séraphita, noted for her haughty and aristocratic manners.

Sometimes he would bring in to his meals, in order to treat them, consumptive friends of his, so starved that every rib in their body showed, having nothing but skin and bones, whom he had picked up in the course of his excursions and wanderings, for he was a kind-hearted fellow. The poor devils, their ears laid back, their tails between their legs, their glance restless, dreading to be driven from their free meal by a house-maid armed with a broom, swallowed the pieces two, three, and four at a time, and like the famous dog, *Siete Aguas* (Seven Waters), of Spanish posadas, would lick the platter as clean as if it had been washed and scoured by a Dutch housekeeper who had served as model to Mieris or Gerard Dow. Whenever I saw

Gavroche's companions, I remembered the lettering under one of Gavarni's drawings: "A nice lot, the friends you are capable of proceeding with!" But after all it was merely a proof of Gavroche's kindness of heart, for he was quite able to polish off the plateful himself.

The cat who bore the name of the interesting Eponine was more lissome and slender in shape than her brothers. Her mien was quite peculiar to herself, owing to her somewhat long face, her eyes slanting slightly in the Chinese fashion, and of a green like that of the eyes of Pallas Athene, on whom Homer invariably bestows the title of γλαυκῶπις, her velvety black nose, of as fine a grain as a Perigord truffle, and her incessantly moving whiskers. Her coat, of a superb black, was always in motion and shimmered with infinite changes. There never was a more sensitive, nervous, and electric animal. If she were stroked two or three times, in the dark, blue sparks came crackling from her fur. She attached herself to me in particular, just as in the novel Eponine becomes attached to Marius. As I was less taken up with Cosette than that handsome youth, I accepted the love of my affectionate and devoted cat, who is still the

assiduous companion of my labours and the delight of my hermitage on the confines of the suburbs. She trots up when she hears the bell ring, welcomes my visitors, leads them into the drawing-room, shows them to a seat, talks to them — yes, I mean it, talks to them — with croonings and cooings and whimpers quite unlike the language cats make use of among themselves, and which simulate the articulate speech of man. You ask me what it is she says? She says, in the plainest possible fashion: "Do not be impatient; look at the pictures or chat with me, if you enjoy that. My master will be down in a minute." And when I come in she discreetly retires to an arm-chair or on top of the piano, and listens to the conversation without breaking in upon it, like a well-bred animal that is used to society.

Sweet Eponine has given us so many proofs of intelligence, kindly disposition, and sociability that she has been promoted, by common consent, to the dignity of a *person*, for it is plain that a higher order of reason than instinct guides her actions. This dignity entails the right of eating at table like a person, and not from a saucer in a corner, like an animal. So Eponine's chair is placed beside mine at lunch and dinner, and on

account of her size she is allowed to rest her fore paws upon the edge of the table. She has her own place set, without fork or spoon, but with her glass. She eats of every course that is brought on, from the soup to the dessert, always waiting for her turn to be served and behaving with a discretion and decency that it is to be wished were more frequently met with in children. She turns up at the first sound of the bell, and when we enter the dining-room we are sure to find her already in her place, standing on her chair, her paws on the edge of the table, and holding up her little head to be kissed, like a well-bred young lady who is polite and affectionate towards her parents and her elders.

The sun has its spots, the diamond its flaws, and perfection itself its little weak points. Eponine, it must be owned, has an overmastering fondness for fish, a taste she shares in common with all her race. The Latin proverb, *Catus amat pisces*, *sed non vult tingere plantas*, to the contrary notwithstanding, she is always ready to pop her paw into the water to fish out a blay, a small carp, or a trout. Fish makes her well-nigh delirious, and like children eagerly looking for the dessert, she is apt to object to the soup, when the

preliminary investigations she has carried on in the kitchen have enabled her to ascertain that the fish has duly come in and that there is no reason why Vatel should run himself through with his sword. In such cases we do not help her to fish, and I remark to her, in a cold tone, "A lady who has no appetite for soup cannot have any appetite for fish," and the dish is remorselessly sent past her. Then seeing that it is no joking matter, dainty Eponine bolts her soup in hot haste, licks up the very last drop of the bouillon, puts away the minutest crumb of bread or Italian paste, and turns round to me with the proud look of one conscious of being without fear or reproach and of having fulfilled her duty. Her share of the fish is handed to her, and she despatches it with every mark of extreme satisfaction. Then, having tasted a little of every dish, she winds up her meal by drinking one-third of a glassful of water.

If we happen to have guests at dinner, Eponine does not need to have seen them enter to be aware that there is to be company. She simply looks at her place, and if she sees a knife, fork, and spoon laid there, she makes off at once and perches on the piano stool, her usual place of refuge in such cases. Those who

deny reasoning powers to animals may explain this fact, so simple apparently, yet so suggestive, as best they may. That judicious and observant cat of mine deduces from the presence by her plate of utensils which man alone understands how to use that she must give up her position for that day to a guest, and she forthwith does so. Never once has she made a mistake. Only, when she is well acquainted with the particular guest, she will climb upon his knee and seek, by her graceful ways and her caresses, to induce him to bestow some tit-bit upon her.

But enough of this; I must not weary my readers, and stories of cats are less attractive than stories about dogs. Yet I deem that I ought to tell of the deaths of Enjolras and Gavroche. In the Latin Rudiments there is a rule stated thus: *Sua eum perdidit ambitio.* Of Enjolras it may be said: *Sua eum perdidit pinguitudo*, that is, his admirable condition was the cause of his death. He was killed by idiotic fanciers of jugged hare. His murderers, however, perished before the end of the year in the most painful manner; for the death of a black cat, an eminently cabalistic animal, never goes unavenged.

Gavroche, seized with a frantic love of freedom, or

rather with a sudden attack of vertigo, sprang out of the window one day, crossed the street, climbed the fence of the Parc Saint-James, which faces our house, and vanished. In spite of our utmost endeavours, we never managed to hear of him again, and a shadow of mystery hangs over his fate; so that the only survivor of the Black Dynasty is Eponine, who is still faithful to her master and has become a thorough cat of letters.

Her companion now is a magnificent angora cat, whose gray and silver fur recalls Chinese spotted porcelain. He is called Zizi, alias "Too Handsome to Work." The handsome fellow lives in a sort of contemplative *kief*, like a theriaki under the influence of the drug, and makes one think of "The Ecstasies of Mr. Hochenez." Zizi is passionately fond of music, and, not satisfied with listening to it, he indulges in it himself. Sometimes, in the dead of night, when everybody is asleep, a strange, fantastic melody, which the Kreislers and the musicians of the future might well envy, breaks in upon the silence. It is Zizi walking upon the key-board of the piano which has been left open, and who is at once astonished and delighted at hearing the keys sing under his tread.

It would be unjust not to link with this branch Cleopatra, Eponine's daughter, whose shy disposition keeps her from mingling in society. She is of a tawny black, like Mummia, Atta-Croll's hairy companion, and her two green eyes look like huge aqua-marines. She generally stands on three legs, her fourth lifted up like a classical lion that has lost its marble ball.

These be the chronicles of the Black Dynasty. Enjolras, Gavroche, and Eponine recall to me the creations of a beloved master; only, when I re-read "Les Misérables," the chief characters in the novel seem to me to be taken by black cats, a fact that in no wise diminishes the interest I take in it.

IV

THIS SIDE FOR DOGS

I HAVE often been charged with not being fond of dogs; a charge which does not at first sight appear to be very serious, but which I nevertheless desire to clear myself of, for it implies a certain amount of dislike. People who prefer cats are thought by many to be cruel, sensuous, and treacherous, while dog-lovers are credited with being frank, loyal, and open-hearted, — in a word, possessed of all the qualities attributed to the canine race. I in no wise deny the merits of Médor, Turk, Miraut, and other engaging animals, and I am prepared to acknowledge the truth of the axiom formulated by Charlet, — "The best thing about man is his dog." I have been the owner of several, and I still own some. Should any of those who seek to discredit me come to my house, they would be met by a Havana lap-dog barking shrilly and furiously at them, and by a greyhound that very likely would bite their legs for them. But my affection for

dogs has an understratum of fear. These excellent creatures, so good, so faithful, so devoted, so loving, may go mad at any moment, and then they become more dangerous than a lance-head snake, an asp, a rattlesnake or a cobra capella. This reacts on my love for dogs. Then dogs strike me as a bit uncanny; they have such a searching, intense glance; they sit down in front of you with so questioning a look that it is fairly embarrassing. Goethe disliked that glance of theirs that seems to attempt to incorporate man's soul within itself, and he drove away dogs, saying, "You shall not swallow my monad, much as you may try."

The Pharamond of my canine dynasty was called Luther. He was a big white spaniel, with liver spots, and handsome brown ears. He was a setter, had lost his owner, and after looking for him a long time in vain, had taken to living in my father's house at Passy. Not having partridges to go after, he had taken to rat-hunting, and was as clever at it as a Scotch terrier. At that time I was living in that blind alley of the Doyenné, now destroyed, where Gérard de Nerval, Arsène Houssaye and Camille Rogier were the heads of a little picturesque and artistic Bohemia, the eccentric mode of life in which has been so well told by

others that it is unnecessary to relate it over again. There we were, right in the centre of the Carrousel, as independent and solitary as on a desert island in Oceanica, under the shadow of the Louvre, among the blocks of stone and the nettles, close to an old ruinous church, with fallen-in roof which looked most romantic in the moonlight. Luther, with whom I was on a most friendly footing, seeing that I had finally abandoned the paternal nest, made a point of coming to see me every morning. He started from Passy, no matter what the weather was, came down the Quai de Billy, the Cours-la-Reine, and reached my place at about eight o'clock, just as I was waking. He used to scratch at the door, which was opened for him, and he dashed joyously at me with yelps of joy, put his paws on my knees, received with a modest and unassuming air the caresses his noble conduct merited, took a look round the room, and started back to Passy. On arriving there, he went to my mother, wagged his tail, barked a little, and said as plainly as if he had spoken: "I have seen young master; don't worry; he is all right." Having thus reported to the proper person the result of his self-imposed mission, he would drink up half a bowlful of water, eat his food, lie down on

the carpet by my mother's chair, — for he entertained peculiar affection for her, — and sleep for an hour or two after his long run. Now, how do people who maintain that animals do not think and are incapable of putting two and two together explain this morning visit, which kept up family relations and brought to the home-nest news of the fledgeling that had so recently left it?

Poor Luther's end was very sad. He became taciturn, morose, and one fine morning bolted from the house, feeling the rabies on him and resolved not to bite his masters; so he fled, and we have every reason to believe that he was killed as a mad dog, for we never saw him again.

After a pretty long interregnum a new dog was brought into the house. It was called Zamore, and was a sort of spaniel, of very mixed breed, small in size, with a black coat, save the tan spots over his eyes and the tan hair on his stomach. On the whole he was insignificant physically, and ugly rather than handsome; but morally, he was a remarkable dog. He absolutely despised women, would not obey them, never would follow them, and never once did my mother or my sisters manage to win from him the least sign of friend-

ship or deference. He would accept their attentions and the tit-bits they gave him with a superior air, but never did he express any gratitude for them. Never would he yelp, never would he rap the floor with his tail, never bestow on them a single one of those caresses dogs are so fond of lavishing. He remained impassible in a sphinx-like pose, like a serious man who will not take part in the conversation of frivolous persons. The master he had elected was my father, in whom he acknowledged the authority of the head of the house, and whom he considered a mature and serious man. But his affection for him was austere and stoical, and was not shown by gambadoes, larks, and lickings. Only, he always kept his eyes upon him, followed his every motion and kept close to heel, never allowing himself the smallest escapade or the least nod to any passing comrades. My dear and lamented father was a great fisherman before the Lord, and he caught more barbels than Nimrod ever slew antelopes. It certainly could not be said of his fishing-rod that it was a pole and string with a worm at one end and a fool at the other, for he was a very clever man, and none the less he daily filled his basket with fish. Zamore used to accompany him on his trips, and

during the long night-watches entailed by ground-line fishing for the big fellows, he would stand on the very edge of the water, apparently trying to fathom its dark depths and to follow the movements of the prey. Although he often pricked up his ears at the faint and distant sounds that, at night, are heard in the deepest silence, he never barked, having understood that to be mute is a quality indispensable in a fisherman's dog. In vain did Phœbe's alabaster brow show above the horizon reflected in the sombre mirror of the river; Zamore would not bay at the moon, although such prolonged ululation gives infinite delight to creatures of his species. Only when the bell on the set-line tinkled did he look at his master and allow himself one short bark, knowing that the prey was caught; and he appeared to take the greatest interest in the manœuvres involved in the landing of a three or four pound barbel.

No one would have suspected that under his calm, abstracted, philosophical look, this dog, so serious that he was almost melancholy, and despised all frivolity, nursed an overmastering, strange, never to be suspected passion, absolutely contrary to his apparent moral and physical character.

"You do not mean," I hear my reader exclaim, "that the good Zamore had hidden vices? — that he was a thief?" No. "A libertine?" No. "That he loved brandied cherries?" No. "That he bit people?" Never. Zamore was crazy about dancing. He was an artist devoted to the choregraphic art.

He became conscious of his vocation in the following manner. One day there appeared on the square at Passy a gray moke, with sores on its back, and drooping ears, one of those wretched mountebanks' asses that Decamps and Fouquet used to paint so well. The two baskets balanced on either side of his raw and prominent backbone contained a troupe of trained dogs, dressed as marquesses, troubadours, Turks, Alpine shepherdesses, or Queens of Golconda, according to their sex. The impresario put down the dogs, cracked his whip, and suddenly every one of the actors forsook the horizontal for the perpendicular position, and transformed itself into a biped. The drum and fife started up and the ballet commenced.

Zamore, who was gravely idling around, stopped smitten with wonder at the sight. The dogs, dressed in showy colours, braided with imitation gold lace on every seam, a plumed hat or a turban on their heads,

and moving in cadence to a witching rhythm, with a distant resemblance to human beings, appeared to him to be supernatural creatures. The skilfully linked steps, the slides, the pirouettes delighted but did not discourage him. Like Correggio at the sight of Raphael's painting, he exclaimed in his canine speech, *Anch' io son pittore!* and when the company filed past him, he also, filled with a noble spirit of emulation, rose up, somewhat uncertainly, upon his hind legs and attempted to join them, to the great delight of the onlookers.

The manager did not see it in that light, and let fly a smart cut of his whip at Zamore, who was driven from the circle, just as a spectator would be ejected from the theatre did he, during the performance, take on himself to ascend to the stage and to take part in the ballet.

This public humiliation did not check Zamore's vocation. He returned home with drooping tail and thoughtful mien, and during the whole of the remainder of that day was more reserved, more taciturn, and more morose than ever. But in the dead of night my sisters were awakened by slight sounds, the cause of which they could not conjecture, which proceeded from an

uninhabited room next theirs, where Zamore was usually put to bed on an old arm-chair. It sounded like a rhythmic tread, made more sonorous by the silence of night. They at first supposed that the mice were romping round, but the sound of steps and leaps on the flooring was too loud for that. The bravest of my sisters rose, partly opened the door, and by the light of a moonbeam streaming in through a pane, she beheld Zamore on his hind legs, pawing the air with his fore paws, and busy studying the dancing steps he had admired in the street that morning. The gentleman was practising!

Nor did this prove, as might be supposed, a passing fancy, a momentary attraction; Zamore persisted in his choregraphic aspirations and turned out a fine dancer. Every time he heard the fife and drum he would run out on the square, slip between the spectators' legs and watch, with the closest attention, the trained dogs performing their exercises. Mindful, however, of the whip-cut, he no longer attempted to take part in the dancing; he took note of the poses, the steps, and the attitudes, and then, at night, in the silence of his room, he would work away at them, remaining the while, during the day, as austere in his bearing as ever. Ere

long he was not satisfied with copying; he took to composing, to inventing, and I am bound to say few dogs surpassed him in the elevated style. I often used to watch him through the half-open door; he practised with such enthusiasm that every night he would drain dry the bowl of water placed in one corner of the room.

When he had become quite sure of himself and the equal of the most accomplished of four-footed dancers, he felt he could no longer hide his light under a bushel and that he must reveal the mystery of his accomplishments. The court-yard of the house was closed, on one side, by an iron fence with spaces sufficiently wide to allow moderately stout dogs to enter in easily. So one fine morning some fifteen or twenty dog friends of his, connoisseurs no doubt, to whom Zamore had sent letters of invitation to his début in the choregraphic art, met around a square of smooth ground nicely levelled off, which the artist had previously swept with his tail, and the performance began. The dogs appeared to be delighted and manifested their enthusiasm by *ouahs ! ouahs !* closely resembling the *bravi* of dilettanti at the Opera. With the sole exception of an old and pretty muddy poodle, very wretched looking, and a critic, no doubt, who barked out something about forgetting

sound tradition, all the spectators proclaimed Zamore the Vestris of dogs and the god of dancing. Our artist had performed a minuet, a jig, and a *deux temps* waltz. A large number of two-footed spectators had joined the four-footed ones, and Zamore enjoyed the honour of being applauded by human hands.

Dancing became so much a habit of his that when he was paying court to some fair, he would stand up on his hind legs, making bows and turning his toes out like a marquis of the *ancien régime*. All he lacked was the plumed hat under his arm.

Apart from this he was as hypochondriacal as a comic actor and took no part in the life of the household. He stirred only when he saw his master pick up his hat and stick. Zamore died of brain fever, brought on, no doubt, by overwork in trying to learn the schottische, then in the full swing of its popularity. Zamore may say within his tomb, as says the Greek dancer in her epitaph: "Earth, rest lightly on me, for I rested lightly on thee."

How came it that being so talented, Zamore was not enrolled in Corvi's company? For I was even then sufficiently influential as a critic to manage this for him. Zamore, however, would not leave his mas-

ter, and sacrificed his self-love to his affection, a proof of devotion which one would look for in vain among men.

A singer, named Kobold, a thorough-bred King Charles from the famous kennels of Lord Lauder, took the place of the dancer. It was a queer little beast, with an enormous projecting forehead, big goggle eyes, nose broken short off at the root, and long ears trailing on the ground. When Kobold was brought to France, knowing no language but English, he was quite bewildered. He could not understand the orders given him; trained to answer to "Go on," or "Come here," he remained motionless when he was told in French, "Viens," or "Va-t'en." It took him a year to learn the tongue of the new country in which he found himself and to take part in the conversation. Kobold was very fond of music, and himself sang little songs with a very strong English accent. The A would be struck on the piano, and he caught the note exactly and modulated with a flute-like sound phrases that were really musical and that had no connection whatever with barking or yelping. When we wanted to make him go on, all we had to do was to say, "Sing a little more," and he would repeat the cadence. Although he was fed

with the utmost care, as was proper in the case of a tenor singer and so distinguished a gentleman, Kobold had one eccentric taste: he would eat earth just like a South American savage. We never succeeded in curing him of the habit, which proved the cause of his death. He was very fond of the stablemen, the horses, and the stable, and my ponies had no more constant companion than he. He spent his time between their loose-boxes and the piano.

After Kobold, the King Charles, came Myrza, a tiny Havana poodle that had the honour of being for a time the property of Giulia Grisi, who gave her to me. She is snow-white, especially when she is fresh from her bath and has not had time to roll over in the dust, a fancy some dogs share with dust-loving birds. She is extremely gentle and affectionate, and as sweet-tempered as a dove. Her little fluffy face, her two little eyes that might be mistaken for upholstery nails, and her little nose like a Piedmont truffle, are most comical. Tufts of hair, curly as Astrakhan fur, fall over her face in the most picturesque and unexpected way, hiding first one eye and then the other, so that she has the most peculiar appearance imaginable and squints like a chameleon.

In Myrza, nature imitates the artificial so perfectly that the little creature looks as if she had stepped out of a toy-shop. When her coat is nicely curled, and she has got on her blue ribbon bow and her silver bell, she is the image of a toy dog, and when she barks it is impossible not to wonder whether there is a bellows under her paws.

She spends three-fourths of her time in sleep, and her life would not be much changed were she stuffed, nor does she seem particularly clever in the ordinary intercourse of life. Yet she one day exhibited an amount of intelligence absolutely unparalleled in my experience. Bonnegrâce, the painter of the portraits of Tchoumakoff and E. H., which attracted so much attention at the exhibitions, had brought to me, in order to get my opinion upon it, one of his portraits painted in the manner of Pagnest, remarkable for truthfulness of colour and vigour of modelling. Although I have lived on terms of closest intimacy with animals and could tell a hundred traits of the ingenuity, reasoning, and philosophical powers of cats, dogs, and birds, I am bound to confess that animals wholly lack any feeling for art. Never have I seen a single one notice a picture, and the story of the birds that picked at the

grapes in the painting by Zeuxis, strikes me as a piece of invention. It is precisely the feeling for ornament and art that distinguishes man from brutes. Dogs never look at pictures and never put on earrings. Well, Myrza, at the sight of the portrait placed against the wall by Bonnegrâce, sprang from the stool on which she was lying curled up, dashed at the canvas and barked furiously at it, trying to bite the stranger who had made his way into the room. Great was her surprise when she found herself compelled to recognise that she had a plane surface before her, that her teeth could not lay hold of it, and that it was no more than a vain presentment. She smelled the picture, tried to wedge in behind the frame, looked at us both with a glance of questioning and wonder, and returned to her place, where she disdainfully went to sleep again, refusing to have anything more to do with the painted individual. Myrza's features will not be lost to posterity, for there is a fine portrait of her by the Hungarian artist, Victor Madarasz.

Let me close with the story of Dash. One day a dealer in broken bottles and glass stopped at my door in quest of such wares. He had in his cart a puppy, three or four months old, which he had been commis-

sioned to drown, whereat the worthy fellow grieved much, for the dog kept looking at him with a tender and beseeching look as if he knew well what was going to happen. The reason of the severe sentence passed on the puppy was that he had broken his fore paw. My heart was filled with pity for him, and I took charge of the condemned creature; called in a vet, and had Dash's paw set in splints and bandaged. It was impossible, however, to stop him gnawing at the dressings; the paw could not be cured, and the bones not having knitted, it hung limp like the sleeve of a man who has lost an arm. His infirmity, however, did not prevent his being jolly, lively, and full of fun, and he managed to race along quite fast on his three legs.

He was an out and out street dog, a rascally little cur that Buffon himself would have been puzzled to classify. He was ugly, but his features were uncommonly mobile and sparkled with cleverness. He seemed to understand what was told him, and his expression would change according as the words addressed to him, in the same tone of voice, were flattering or injurious. He rolled his eyes, turned up his lips, indulged in the wildest of nervous twitchings, or

else grinned and showed his white teeth, obtaining in this way most comical effects of which he was perfectly conscious. He would often try to talk; laying his paw on my knee, he would fix on me that earnest gaze of his and begin a series of murmurs, sighs, and grunts, so varied in intonation that it was hard not to recognise them as language. Sometimes in the course of a conversation of this sort, Dash would break out into a bark or a yelp, and then I would look sternly at him and say: "That is barking, not speaking. Is it possible that you are an animal?" Dash, feeling humiliated at the suggestion, would go on with his vocalisation, giving it the most pathetic expression. We used to say then that Dash was telling his tale of woe.

He was passionately fond of sugar, and at dessert, when coffee was brought in, he would invariably beg each guest for a piece with such insistence that he was always successful. He had ended by transforming this merely benevolent gift into a regular tax which he collected with unfailing regularity. He was but a little mongrel, yet with the frame of a Thersites he had the soul of an Achilles. Infirm though he was, he would attack, with madly heroic courage, dogs ten times his

size and was regularly and terribly thrashed by them. Like Don Quixote, the brave Knight of La Mancha, he set out triumphantly and returned in most evil plight. Alas! he was destined to fall a victim to his own courage. Some months ago he was brought home with a broken back, the work of a Newfoundland, an amiable brute, which the next day played the same trick to a small greyhound.

Dash's death was the first of a series of catastrophes: the mistress of the house where he met with the death-stroke was, a few days later, burned alive in her bed, and the same fate overtook her husband who was trying to save her. This was merely a fatal coincidence and by no means an expiation, for these people were of the kindest and as fond of animals as is a Brahmin, besides being wholly innocent of our poor Dash's tragic fate.

It is true that I have still another dog, called Nero, but he is too recent an inmate of our home to have a story of his own.

(NOTE. — Alas! Nero has been poisoned quite recently, just as if he had been supping with the Borgias, and his epitaph comes in the very first chapter of his life.)

V

MY HORSES

NOW let not the reader, on seeing this title, hastily accuse me of being a swell. Horses! That is a pretentious word to be written down by a man of letters! *Musa pedestris*, says Horace; that is, the Muse goes on foot, and Parnassus itself has but one horse in its stable, Pegasus. Besides, he is a winged steed and by no means quiet in harness, if we may credit what Schiller tells us in his ballad. I am not a sportsman, alas! and deeply do I regret it, for I am as fond of horses as if I had five hundred thousand a year, and I am entirely of the opinion of the Arabs concerning pedestrians. The horse is man's natural pedestal, and the one complete being is the centaur, whom mythology so ingeniously invented.

Nevertheless, although I am merely a man of letters, I have owned horses. In the year 1843 or 1844, I found in the pay-dirt of journalism, washed out in the

wooden pan of the *feuilleton*, a sufficient quantity of gold dust to justify the hope that I might feed, besides my cats, dogs, and magpies, a couple of animals of larger size. I first had a couple of Shetland ponies, the size of big dogs, hairy as bears, all mane and tail, and who looked at me in such friendly fashion through their long black hair that I felt more like showing them into the drawing-room than sending them to the stable. They would take sugar out of my pockets like trained horses. But they proved to be decidedly too small; they would have answered as saddle horses for English children eight years of age, or as coach horses for Tom Thumb, but I was already in the enjoyment of that athletic and portly frame for which I am famed, and which has enabled me to bear up, without bending too much under the burden, under forty consecutive years of supplying of copy. The difference between the owner and the animals was unquestionably too striking, even though the little black ponies drew at a very lively gait the light phaeton to which they were harnessed with the daintiest tan harness, that looked as if it had been bought in a toy shop.

Comic illustrated papers were not as numerous then as now, but there were quite enough of them to publish

caricatures of me and of my horses. It goes without saying that, profiting by the latitude allowed to caricature, I was represented as of elephantine bulk and appearance, like the god Ganesa, the Hindoo god of wisdom, and that my ponies were shown as no larger than poodles, rats, or mice. It is also true that I could readily enough have carried my pair one under each arm, and taken the carriage on my back. I did for a moment think of having a pony four-in-hand, but such a Liliputian equipage would have merely attracted greater attention. So to my great regret, for I had already become fond of them, I replaced my Shetlands with two dapple-gray cobs of larger size, with powerful necks, broad chests, stout and well set up, which were not Mecklenburghers, no doubt, but plainly more capable of dragging me along. They were both mares, the one called Jane, the other Betsy. So far as outward looks went, they were as alike as two peas, and never was there a better matched pair apparently. But Betsy was as lazy as Jane was willing. While the one drew steadily, the other was satisfied with trotting along, saving herself and taking good care to do nothing. These two animals, of the same breed, of the same age, and destined to live in the same stable, had

the liveliest antipathy for each other. They could not bear one another, fought in the stable, and bit each other as they reared in harness. It was impossible to reconcile them, which was a pity, for with their hog manes, like those of the horses on the Parthenon frieze, their quivering nostrils, and their eyes dilated with anger, they looked uncommonly handsome as they were driven up or down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. A substitute had to be found for Betsy, and a small mare, somewhat lighter coloured, for it had been impossible to match her exactly, was brought round. Jane immediately welcomed the new-comer and did the honours of the stable to her most graciously, and ere long they became fast friends. Jane would rest her head on Blanche's neck — she had been so called because her gray coat was rather whitish — and when they were let loose in the yard after being rubbed down, they would play together like a pair of dogs or children. If one was taken out driving, the one left in the stable was plainly wearying for her, and as soon as she heard in the distance the ring of her companion's hoofs on the paving-stones, she set up a joyous neigh, like a trumpet-blast, to which the other did not fail to reply as she approached.

They would come up to be harnessed with astonishing docility, and took of themselves their proper place by the pole. Like all animals that are loved and well treated, Jane and Blanche soon became most familiar and trusting. They would follow me without bridle or halter like the best-trained dog, and when I stopped they would stick their noses on my shoulder in order to be caressed. Jane was fond of bread, and Blanche of sugar, and both were crazy about melon skin. I could make them do anything in return for these dainties.

If man were not odiously brutal and ferocious, as he too frequently shows himself towards animals, they would cling to him most gladly. Their dim brain is filled with the thought of that being who thinks, speaks, and does things the meaning of which escapes them; he is a mystery and a wonder to them. They will often look at you with eyes full of questions you cannot answer, for the key to their speech has not yet been found. Yet they have a speech which enables them to exchange, by means of intonations not yet noted by man, ideas that are rudimentary, no doubt, but which are such as may be conceived by creatures within their sphere of action and feeling. Less stupid than we are, animals succeed in understanding a few

words of our idiom, but not enough to enable them to converse with us. Besides, as the words they do learn refer solely to what we exact of them, the conversation would be brief. But that animals speak cannot be doubted by any one who has lived in any degree of intimacy with dogs, cats, horses, or other creatures of that sort.

For instance, Jane was naturally intrepid; she never refused, and nothing frightened her, but after a few months of cohabitation with Blanche her character changed and she manifested at times sudden and inexplicable fear. Her companion, much less brave, must have told her ghost stories at night. Often, when going through the Bois de Boulogne at dusk or after dark, Blanche would stop short or shy, as if a phantom, invisible to me, had risen up before her. She trembled in every limb, breathed hard, and broke out into sweat. If I attempted to urge her ahead with the whip, she backed, and all Jane could do, strong as she was, was insufficient to induce her to go on. One of us would have to get down, cover her eyes with the hand and lead her until the vision had vanished. Little by little Jane became subject to the same terror, the reason of which, no doubt, Blanche told her once they were back in their stable. I may as well confess that for my

part, when I would be driving down a dark road on which the moonlight produced alternations of light and shadow, and Blanche suddenly became rooted to the spot as though a spectre had sprung at her head, and refused to move, — she who was usually so docile that Queen Mab's whip, made of a cricket's bone with a spider's thread for a thong, was enough to start her into a gallop, — I could not repress a slight shudder or refrain from peering into the darkness rather anxiously, while at times the harmless trunks of ash or birch trees would appear to me as spectral-looking as one of Goya's "Caprices."

I took great delight in driving these dear animals myself, and we soon became very intimate. It was merely as a matter of form that I held the reins, for the least click of the tongue was enough to direct them, to turn them to the right or the left, to make them go faster, or to stop them. They quickly learned all my habits and started of themselves for the office, the printer's, the publishers', the Bois de Boulogne, and the houses where I went to dinner on certain days of the week, and this so accurately that they would have ended by compromising me, for they would have revealed the places to which I paid the most mysterious

visits. If I happened to forget the time in the course of an interesting or tender conversation they would remind me it was getting late by neighing or pawing in front of the balcony.

Although I greatly enjoyed traversing the city in the phaeton drawn by my two friends, I could not help at times thinking the north wind sharp and the rain cold when the months came along which the Republican calendar named so appropriately the months of mist, of frost, of rain, of wind, of snow (brumaire, frimaire, pluviôse, ventôse, nivôse), so I purchased a small blue coupé, lined with white reps, which was likened to the equipage of the famous dwarf of the day, a piece of impertinence I did not mind. A brown coupé, lined with garnet, followed the blue one, and was itself replaced by a dark-green coupé lined with dark blue, for I actually did sport a coach — I, poor newspaper writer holding no Government stock — for five or six years. And my ponies were none the less fat and in good condition though they were fed on literature, had substantives for oats, adjectives for hay, and adverbs for straw. But alas! there came, no one knows very well why, the Revolution in February; a great many paving-stones were picked up for patriotic purposes, and

Paris became rather unfit for carriage travel. I could of course have escaladed the barricades with my agile steeds and my light equipage, but it was only at the cook-shop that I could get credit, and I could not possibly feed my horses on roast chicken. The horizon was dark with heavy clouds, through which flashed red gleams. Money had taken fright and gone into hiding; the *Presse*, on the staff of which I was, had suspended publication, and I was glad enough to find a person willing to buy my horses, harness, and carriages for a fourth of their value. It was a bitter grief to me, and I would not venture to say that no tears ran down my cheeks on to the manes of Jane and Blanche when they were led away. Sometimes their new owner would drive past the house; I always knew their quick, sharp trot at a distance, and always the sudden way they would stop under my windows proved that they had not forgotten the place where they had been so tenderly loved and so well cared for, and a sigh would break responsive from me as I said to myself: "Poor Jane, poor Blanche! I wonder if they are happy."

And the loss of them is the one and only thing I felt sore over when I lost my slender fortune.

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PARIS BESIEGED

Introduction

THERE must be some, there may be many, among the readers of this edition of Gautier's works, who remember the thrill of horror, the stupefaction of surprise caused by the announcement that the Germans had resolved to bombard Paris, invested by them after the fall of the Empire at Sedan and the rout of the French armies under MacMahon and other generals. The civilised world stood aghast at the thought that in the latter part of the nineteenth century a power, calling itself civilised and boasting of the high degree of learning and culture attained by its subjects, could deliberately order the shelling of a city unique in the world and inhabited by thousands of men, women, and children utterly guiltless of any offence towards the conquering Germans. The war, which had already, and so speedily, brought about the final overthrow of the Second Empire, was well-known to be the war of the

Empress Eugénie and her moody, weak-willed husband. The people of France, outside the Court party, had neither desired it nor called for it. It was undertaken as a last desperate effort to stay the tottering throne and to secure the succession of the Prince Imperial, doomed to die so tragic a death in later years. The ministry, presided over by Ollivier, was the tool of the Empress and entered upon the conflict, all unprepared as it was for the struggle, "with a light heart." When Douay, MacMahon, and Frossard were smashed one after another, when the Emperor and his army surrendered at Sedan and completed the unquestioned triumph of the Teuton arms, the new Republican government earnestly sought peace and found it not, for Bismarck was resolved to humble and crush, not merely the imperial house, but ancient France herself. So Paris was invested, and the bombardment was ordered.

That the capital would make any real resistance, least of all any prolonged resistance, was not believed; but Bismarck mistook or failed to understand the French character. It is excitable, imaginative, liable to sudden and inexplicable changes of feeling, now confident beyond all reason, now equally plunged in deep

despondency, but at bottom endowed with a tenacity of purpose and a resoluteness in execution for which sufficient credit is not ordinarily given to it. This was well proved by the heroic defence, not of the great capital only, but of Strasburg, of Phalsburg, and of Belfort, to name only the most splendid instances of patient and indomitable resistance. Thus the siege of Paris, which, it had been anticipated, would prove but child's play, turned out to be a most serious business and one which cost the Germans dear. The glory was not theirs in this case; they have no reason to be proud of the part they played on that occasion; but, on the other hand, the defence of Paris, as of the other fortified towns named above, is one of the most splendid of the many splendid memories of France.

It may be well to recall briefly the main facts in the history of that terrible campaign, which, begun with boisterous cries of "To Berlin! to Berlin!" ended with the march of the Prussians down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées.

The French Emperor, feeling his hold on the people greatly endangered, had, yielding to the counsels of the Empress and the Court party, made up his mind that a successful war was the readiest way of consolidating

his power and securing his throne. An opportunity seemed to be afforded him by the candidature of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who had been offered the Spanish crown. This was in July, 1870. On the sixth of that month, in the Corps Législatif, de Grammont declared that France would not allow "its interests and honour to be imperilled." The Hohenzollern candidature was withdrawn, and the incident seemed closed, undoubtedly to the chagrin of the Emperor and his circle. But a fancied slight, said to have been offered to Benedetti, the French ambassador, by King William, was eagerly made the most of, and on the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, Paris resounded with shouts of "To Berlin! to Berlin!" Five days later war was declared, and in little more than a week the Emperor started for Metz, to take the chief command of the troops, leaving the Empress, as Regent, in the rose-embowered palace of Saint-Cloud. With him went the young Prince Imperial, who was to receive "the baptism of fire" upon the slopes of Saarbrück, where a demonstration in force was magnified into a brilliant victory.

This second of August was, however, all too speedily followed by the fourth of the same month,

when Douay was utterly defeated, and slain, at Wissemburg, with the result that Alsace was invaded and French territory fell into the hands of the Germans. MacMahon was next routed at Wörth, Fröschwiller, and Reichshoffen, and on the same day Frossard was served in similar fashion at Spickeren. The mainstay of the French defence — intended originally to be the attack — was completely destroyed. The Emperor and MacMahon fell back upon Sedan, Bazaine holding Metz. The incapable Lebeuf was removed from his command and the "glorious Bazaine" was appointed commander-in-chief, the Emperor abandoning the supreme military authority he had hitherto exercised, in name at least. The Ollivier ministry had fallen on receipt of the evil news from Wörth, and had been succeeded by one under the presidency of Palikao. At the same time Strasburg was invested and bombarded, holding out with superb gallantry under a rain of shells that wrought havoc infinite, and maintaining its defence from August 11 until September 28, when it was compelled to surrender. On September 1 and 2 was fought the battle of Sedan, that entailed the capitulation of the army and the surrender of the Emperor. At one stroke France lost its titular head — no great

loss in itself — one marshal, thirty-nine generals, eighty-six thousand men, ten thousand horses, and six hundred and fifty guns.

Paris proclaimed the downfall of the Empire and the establishment of the Third Republic; the Empress fled from the Tuileries, passing through the Louvre, and helped to escape by an American dentist, Dr. Evans, to that England which has invariably been the refuge of all Frenchmen fleeing from their land, from the Bourbon Charles X and the Orleanist Louis-Philippe to the unspeakable Rochefort, and the champion of Dreyfus and justice.

It was plain that Paris was in danger. The German armies were concentrating around it, and by September 18 the siege had begun. It lasted until January 29, and during the whole of that period the capital gave proof of stern steadfastness of purpose and heroic determination to resist. The men in the city were all called to the colours. The National Guard comprised two hundred and sixty-six battalions, those formed of the younger element being included among the marching regiments and intrusted, along with the line regiments in Paris, with the duty of taking part in the fierce and bloody sorties attempted in the hope of

breaking through the circle of fire and steel formed by the invader. The older men constituted the guard of the ramparts; the sailors and the Paris militia garrisoned the forts, and the provincial militia was added to Vinoy's corps, which had succeeded in escaping the disaster at Sedan and formed an army by itself.

It was on September 18 that the Prussian vanguards appeared before the city, and on the following day the victory of Châtillon gave von Moltke the command of the southern forts and quarters. King William, Bismarck, and von Moltke established their headquarters at Versailles, and it was in the great Gallery of Mirrors that, some weeks later, the King was proclaimed Emperor of Germany.

Bazaine was in Metz, making no real effort to break out, and starving his troops. Finally he surrendered on October 27, handing over to the Germans three marshals of France, six thousand officers, one hundred and seventy-three thousand men, thirteen thousand horses, one thousand six hundred and sixty-five guns, nearly three hundred thousand rifles, and all the colours.

This terrible disaster was at first kept from the knowledge of Paris, though news of it leaked in.

There was trouble within the capital itself, and civil war was on the point of breaking out among the besieged. There were men, numerous enough to cause anxiety to the authorities, who desired the establishment of a Commune and a more vigorous prosecution of the defence. It must be owned that the incapacity of General Trochu, commanding in chief, explained, if it did not justify, this disposition. As early as October 8 there occurred on the Place of the Hôtel de Ville, the traditional ground for riot and revolt, a manifestation in favour of the immediate creation of a Commune, but the danger was turned aside for the moment. On the 28th, 29th, and 30th, a great sortie was undertaken, and the village of Bourget was the scene of most desperate fighting, in which the French troops won distinction. On the 31st, the Government had to own that it was acquainted with Bazaine's treasonable surrender, and at once the National Guards of the Belleville quarter, then, as now, the hot-bed of discontent and agitation in Paris, attacked the Hôtel de Ville, but were repulsed.

Meanwhile starvation and sickness were adding to the havoc wrought by the bombardment. The winter was one of the most severe experienced for many years;

there was little or no means of heating houses; scarcely enough to cook the wretched rations of putrid horse-flesh that constituted the main diet of the heroic defenders. No help came from outside; the French armies created by Gambetta won a success here and there, only enough to keep hope alive in the breasts of the lovers of France, but the reverses were more numerous and greater. No aid, no intervention from abroad. Europe looked calmly on while the fairest city within its bounds was being laid waste in the most barbarous manner by so-called civilised troops. At last, on January 29, the city capitulated, conquered by famine.

All the world then believed it had seen the worst that could befall Paris. The crowning humiliation of seeing the Germans enter the mourning city had not been spared; the Teuton pride had been unable to deny itself that satisfaction. Yet worse was to come. The National Guards, especially the regiments formed in the more turbulent quarters, had sided with the mob that exists in every great city, and rallies to itself the worst elements in the community, and had carried off the guns parked on the Place Wagram. By a terrible oversight, these troops, so unreliable at a moment of

national excitement, when it was of the utmost importance that the peace should not be broken and the Government should be allowed to pursue its work of settlement and restoration undisturbed by other preoccupations,—these troops had been allowed to retain their arms. The mistake was sought to be corrected; too late, as it proved. General Lecomte was ordered to proceed to Montmartre, the hill upon which the guns had been placed by the insurgents, and to remove the artillery. His own men turned upon him and fraternised with the revolted Guards. Lecomte himself and General Thomas, who commanded in chief the National Guards of Paris, were made prisoners and shot in cold blood. The Government fled the city and removed to Versailles, where it at once assembled an army the command of which was given to Marshal MacMahon. Meantime the insurgents created the Central Commune in Paris and announced their resolve to resist all attempts to establish the authority of the Versailles government over them. There was nothing for it but to conquer the city, and the piteous sight was seen of Frenchmen strayed against Frenchmen around the capital of the land. The second siege, begun on April 3, was conducted vigorously and as stubbornly

resisted. On May 24, the Versailles troops managed to penetrate the city by the gate of the Point-du-Jour, at the western extremity. Then followed the most desperate and bloody street-fighting that Paris, well used to this form of warfare, had ever beheld. But the national troops would not be denied; brilliantly and courageously led, they stormed one barricade after another, and drove the criminal insurgents from their successive strongholds until they stood at bay in the great cemetery of Père-Lachaise, right in their own special quarter, and there, against a wall that may still be seen decorated with the blood-red emblems of the Commune, the last *fédérés* fell.

Terrible were the reprisals. The streets of Paris ran with blood, literally, not figuratively, during these dreadful days. Gallifet smote fiercely and unflinchingly the foe before him. Paris was blazing, for the Commune had resolved to have a funereal pomp worthy of itself. The most splendid monuments, the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, the Palace of Justice, the Préfecture de Police, the Ministry of Marine, the Cour des Comptes, the Palace of the Legion of Honour, the Palace of the Council of State, the Palace of the Tuileries, the Palace of the Louvre, with its priceless works of art, numbers

of houses and quarters, the Palais-Royal, the Théâtre-Lyrique, the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin, the Grenier d'Abondance, the docks at La Villette, — all were given over to the flames. The destruction was methodical. Paris was divided up into quarters for the purpose of conflagration. Each quarter had its own brigade of destroyers. The doomed buildings, whether public monuments or private property, were marked beforehand with wafers placed on a certain part of the doors. These wafers bore on the one side a Phrygian cap, and on the other the letters V P or B P B, which were understood to mean *Versez du pétrole* (Soak with petroleum) and *Bon pour brûler* (Burn down). Men first traversed the district and warned the inhabitants to clear out, as their houses were devoted to destruction. They were followed by bands of women and children carrying petroleum in all manner of utensils, whose business it was to soak all the woodwork with the oil, and to set fire to it, though often this was done by other incendiaries following in their wake. Other means used were the throwing of petroleum shells or bombs into the hatchways of cellars, nitro-glycerine and other explosives being also resorted to. Petroleum shells were fired upon the finest residential quarters,

and incalculable mischief wrought in this way. The fire-engines were frequently filled with petroleum, in order to feed instead of putting out the flames, and the water-pipes and mains were cut to prevent any attempt at rescue of the doomed buildings. Men were stationed to shoot down any one endeavouring to stay the progress of the conflagration. Notre-Dame was saved by the young house-surgeons of the Hôtel-Dieu, — which itself, though filled with Communist wounded, was attempted to be set on fire, — fighting the flames amid showers of bullets.

The fires started on the night of May 23–24, and for some days the capital was one vast furnace, in which the Versailles troops were fighting the insurgents and at the same time endeavouring to save the buildings. The Rue Royale, the Rue de Lille, the Rue du Bac were all ablaze, and both sides of the river and the island in its centre were foci of destruction.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that when the insurrection was at last suppressed, there was a general feeling that Paris was no longer a safe place for the headquarters of the National Government, and as the Assembly was then sitting at Versailles, a number of deputies joined in a motion to have the seat of govern-

ment transferred to the town that Louis XIV had created out of dislike to the great city of Paris. This was in July. The motion itself was as follows: "A committee of fifteen members shall be appointed for the purpose of reporting *at once* on the best means of suitably installing the various ministries in Versailles."

This naturally provoked an outburst of protests on the part of the Parisians, who felt deeply the imputation conveyed in the proposal. It is needless to discuss here and now the many reasons that might be, and many of which were, urged against the proposal, which, fortunately, was not carried; this much may be said, that the adoption of it would not merely have done injustice to Paris, but would have cost France and the world the historical palace of Versailles, unique in its way, for it would have suffered irremediably in the course of the transformations rendered necessary by the transference of the capital.

Gautier made a spirited and just plea against the proposal, in the concluding chapter of this book, entitled "Paris, the Capital," in the course of which he took occasion to point out the admirable manner in which the great city had stood out for France through good report and evil report, through siege and famine,

through all the stress and storm of the months of war. He showed that a capital is not to be created by a mere expression of will, and that it was impossible to make Versailles, even, rival ancient Lutetia. Versailles was the complete and perfect expression of a king who himself was the complete and perfect expression of his time. But Republican France was not and would not wish to be Louis XIV.

In some respects this is one of the most beautiful, and certainly one of the most touching books Gautier ever wrote. Naturally the circumstances under which the different articles, now chapters, were composed and given to the public account in part for the special charm of the work; but even more striking is the fact that not all the calamities due to the war, not all the suffering entailed by the siege, not all the horrors consequent on the creation of the Commune could dull, far less destroy the artistic sense in him, a sense he possessed to such a degree that it made him intensely human in his feelings for those around him and for the woes and sorrows that he daily beheld.

He need not have experienced the misery of being beleaguered and separated from those he loved, for when the war broke out he was in Switzerland, with one of

his daughters, Estelle, and Carlotta Grisi, in the lovely Montreux that nestles on the shores of Lake Leman. But on learning of the disasters that had befallen the national arms, he hastened back and reached the capital on September 9, just in time to be shut up with his fellow-townsmen and townswomen for the next four and a half months. Much of his occupation was gone, as he somewhat mournfully admits, and indeed he knew then, as so many more learned also at their own cost, the full measure of need and distress. But he kept up his heart, and the geniality of the man never manifested itself more plainly than in these dark and troubled days. The articles he wrote for the *Journal Officiel*, the *Illustration*, and the *Gazette de Paris*, are those reproduced here, and were subsequently included in volume form among his collected works under the title "Tableaux de Siège." They are not, as has already been said, either a diary of the siege or an attempt to follow the operations, but simply what the original title indicates more plainly than the one adopted here: pictures of the siege; tableaux seen here or there and carried away in the mind of the writer. The subjects are various, and do not appear always to be connected, yet they are all bound together by the one great fact of the invest-

ment, the bombardment, the famine, and Death stalking abroad; by the other great fact that Gautier remained the artist and the worshipper of Beauty that he was from his earliest years, and that he managed to see beauty even where most people, and by no means the least clear-sighted, would have recognised but horror and woe.

Take, for example, his account of the destruction wrought by the Commune, — the burning of the Cour des Comptes. The first thing that strikes him as he enters the precincts forbidden to the general public, is the *beauty* of the ruins — the italics are his own. He feels that he will be blamed for seeing this and not being, on the contrary, swayed by anger, carried away by hatred of the fiends who have done the evil; but there it is, and as it is there and he worships beauty, he must needs speak of it. This is not detachment from things human and contempt for the sufferings of the masses or the individuals; far from it, it is the natural expression of a sentiment that forms an essential part, the main part of his nature. Sympathy for the suffering he has in abundance; the tender biographies of Regnault and Giraud testify to that; sympathy for the brute creation also, as is proved by the chapters on the

"Animals during the Siege," and there are few passages, in the literature composed by the friends of the dog, more touching, more true than the lines he penned upon the abandoned dogs straying through the streets of the city in search of a master, of a human being on whom they could bestow their love, and whom they could reward with undying affection in return for a morsel of food.

He saw the picturesque side of the scenes presented by the altered aspect of the place he had known from childhood, and that now showed itself in its warlike guise. How many, besides Gautier, could have found in the rectilineal lines of the ramparts any touch of that magic beauty he esteemed so highly and so rightly? Many of us have gone on that urban river trip which he so charmingly describes, yet how many have been able, even to themselves, to describe it as he has done? Then when, the Germans having come and gone out of the capital they hated, yet envied, and which they were determined to darken with their presence, Gautier was able, with thousands of his hitherto beleaguered fellow-citizens, to issue forth once more, what an admirable chapter, full of suggestiveness, of breadth of view, as well as of superb description, and

true feeling for the art of Greece and Rome, an art he had combated in his hot youth, does the Halt of Communist Prisoners on the Place d'Armes at Versailles inspire him with! It is a philosophical as well as an artistic piece of work. And this Versailles, now the headquarters of the French army besieging the very Paris he but so lately left, leads him back into the past, and we have the beautiful descriptions of the palace gardens as they existed under Louis XIV. We know much more about the Versailles of the Great King than was known in 1871, for the love of research and the care for the intelligent preservation of historical monuments have made great strides since that day; yet it is most delightful to follow Gautier down the green embowered walks and into the groves that then, as now, were filled with song of birds and whispered memories of the Great Age of France. Much that he describes as being damaged or ruined or vanished altogether, has been repaired, restored, renewed, and one cannot help regretting that the Romanticist who could so heartily own his youthful mistakes and proclaim Versailles "still unrivalled in the world; the supreme formula of a complete art and the highest expression of a civilisation that had reached its fullest development,"

had not been spared to see the very restorations he desired carried out so artistically and so thoroughly. Versailles is left, if Saint-Cloud is no more, and Paris has arisen from the ashes of the Communist fires more beautiful, more fascinating, more interesting than ever.

Paris Besieged

PARIS BESIEGED

I

A NEW MADONNA
THE STRASBURG STATUE

SEPTEMBER, 1870.

ON traversing the Place de la Concorde, enlivened by the evolutions and the marching of the troops, one's attention is attracted by the ever changing group at the foot of the statue that represents Strasburg, which from the top of its pedestal, as it were from the top of an altar, looks down majestically upon the prostrate multitude. A new worship has been instituted; one that will have not a single dissentient. The sacred statue is adorned like a Madonna, and never has a devotional figure been covered with more ornaments by the faithful. It is true that these are neither dresses embroidered with pearls nor mantles of gold brocade gemmed with rubies and sapphires, such as are worn by the Toledo

Virgin. Instead she has tricolour flags, forming a sort of warlike tunic rayed with streaks of generous blood.

Upon her battlemented crown have been placed garlands of flowers, and the statue almost disappears under the heaped-up bouquets and the patriotic *ex-votos*. At night, Venetian lanterns are lighted, like unto the small tapers set burning by pious souls in churches before the figures of the Divine Mother, and illumine the impassible and serene figure. Not the least contraction of its proudly beautiful features betrays the fact that the seven swords of pain have been driven into its breast, and when the rosy light of the lanterns flits over its pallid lips it almost seems to smile.

Around it flutter streamers bearing patriotic inscriptions, and on the pedestal are inscribed expressions of love and admiration. Verses and stanzas are pencilled, and while art is not always visible in these effusions, feeling is never absent from them. At the foot of the pedestal stands wide open a large register, upon which signature follows signature. The people of Paris are putting their names down as callers upon the City of Strasburg. The volume, which is to be splendidly bound and blazoned with the arms of the glorious city,

is to be presented to the great martyr that has offered itself up for the honour and salvation of France, and no city will ever have held in its archives a more glorious Golden Book.

By one of those exquisitely gracious impulses that at times thrill the masses, the people of Paris seem, by their adoption of this statue as a sacred image, as a sort of Palladium, and by worshipping it constantly, to seek to compensate the unfortunate city by giving it a proof of ardent sympathy, and to back it up to the best of their ability in its heroic resistance.

How often, during the short holidays which the summer time brings to the newspaper man, have I traversed Strasburg on my way to Baden, Wiesbaden, Heidelberg, Munich, or Stuttgart. I always broke my journey there, and paid a visit to my old friend the Cathedral. Every time I found its lofty spire rising heavenwards with the unchanged faith of former days. Upon its red granite walls the rust of time showed green in spots, as upon armour of copper-work. The saints kept watch in their lace-work niches, and under the portal the Wise and the Foolish Virgins marched in unbroken symbolical procession. Punctually at noon the Twelve Apostles moved around Jesus-Christ upon

the astronomical clock, the work of Schwilgué, which has taken the place of that of Conrad Dasypodius.

From the corner of the square the statue of Erwin of Steinbach, the architect of the Cathedral, cast on me a friendly smile as if to say that he recognised me. The storks flew away, their long legs outstretched behind them, just as in the vignettes by Delalain, or stood on their nests at the top of the huge roofs with six stories of dormer windows that are peculiar to Strasburg.

I loved the city for its picturesque appearance and the various minor peculiarities of detail and character that are significant of the surrounding country and that are to be met with in frontier towns. Nevertheless, Strasburg was French, very French indeed, and it is testifying to the fact to-day in the most conclusive manner.

Who could then have foreseen that this lovely, peaceful city, the home of study and learned investigation, warlike, all the same, in spite of its patriarchal, kindly look, and girding itself with a belt of guns, would one day be attacked with such incredible fury? When, at night, I gazed upon Charlie's Wain, the Little Bear, and Cassiopeia, glittering like golden dots behind the dark lace-work of the Cathedral, who would

have thought that the soft starlight would ever be eclipsed by the sinister flaming of shells? Yet a rain of iron falls night and day upon the Cathedral, smashing the finials, mutilating the statues, breaking in the vaulting of the nave, and damaging the clock with its multitude of figures and its millions of wheels. The library, unique in its way, has been burned to the ground. Incunables from the old Commandery of Saint John of Jerusalem, the *Hortus deliciarum* given by Herrada of Landsberg, who was abbess of Sainte-Odile at the end of the twelfth century, the poem of *The War of Troy*, composed by Conrad of Wurtzburg, the poems of Gaspard of Hagenau, missals, breviaries, manuscripts with miniatures, one hundred and fifty thousand volumes of the greatest value, have been reduced to ashes. The Rue de la Nuée-Bleue (the Blue Cloudlet), a romantic name that takes my fancy, has lost several of its houses, and the theatre is but a mass of débris.

Yet maugre all these disasters, the Spartan city maintains its heroic resistance, and its great soul refuses to be cast down; sooner than surrender, it will bury itself under its own ruins. The brave general Ulrich stands firm against the frightful rain of fire. In spite of the

conflagrations that break out everywhere like flames on tripods, and that burn the folds of its robe upon its flesh, the sublime city shakes its head at every offer of capitulation, and Germany summons up still heavier guns and orders them to blast the insolent town.

Rebellious and obstinate, Strasburg refuses to remember its German origin, and bears in mind but one thing: that it gave itself to France with all its heart and soul, and that it is determined to die for her. But die it shall not. Though the blazing sky be traversed by shells, bombs, and balls, the Cathedral still stands, and on the dark profile of the spire still shows the cross of light, symbol of hope and salvation, which the enemy on the other side of the Rhine sees glittering yet.

II

A TRIP BY WATER

October, 1870.

DOES not Paris impress one as a huge city capable of tiring out the most indefatigable of pedestrians? Well, since it has become impossible to leave it, the long length of walls annoys and confines the population as a belt too tightly drawn. The Bois de Boulogne, Meudon, Saint-Cloud, Ville d'Avray, Versailles, Vincennes and all the lovely sites that extend beyond Charenton, along the banks of the Marne, are forbidden ground to us. Within the city itself, the palace gardens have been transformed into camps and artillery parks, as have also the squares where children used to play. Then, as if to excite still further the desire for change which, at this time of year, drives the laziest and the most sedentary to travel, the weather is pitilessly splendid; an implacably serene sky, cloudless but for the distant smoke of guns, is outspread over our heads, nor is the

azure against which stand out the minarets of Cairo and the pillars of the Parthenon more perfectly transparent and pure. Nature often indulges in irony of this sort; its joys and sorrows do not coincide with ours, it takes no care to be in harmony with the state of our souls, and at times one feels like blaming it for its indifference to human affairs. Yet, bitter though the grief one feels, grieved to the heart though one may be, it is difficult not to feel somewhat the spell of the deep serenity, of the light that falls upon the darkness of one's soul, of the joy that is unconscious of one's sorrow. Things smile as well as weep, and so one goes down into the street, dropping the book that was being read but mechanically, forsaking the page which has failed to attach the thought, and unconsciously one's feet lead one to the quay, towards the wide, open space of the Seine filled with air and sunshine, animated by the rush of the waters, where one seems to breathe more freely than anywhere else.

The river steamers are going up and down with the speed of the dory, meeting and passing on their way, taking and putting down passengers at the landing-places along the river, now on the right, now on the left, according to the importance of the quarter. But

whether they are going up or down, they are always full; the cabin is crammed, the decks are crowded, and there is no chance of getting a seat save at the farthest starting-places. The small fare charged, fifteen centimes, no doubt accounts in part for the extraordinary popularity of these river boats, but it is not the only cause thereof. The trip one makes upon them is a sort of travel on a small scale that takes the place of the excursions the enemy has put a stop to; it gives one the illusion of liberty, and people go from the Point-du-Jour to Charenton just as formerly they went round the Lake in the Bois.

And indeed it is a delightful trip that enables one to see Paris under an unfamiliar aspect; so, as my profession of dramatic critic is at present a very leisurely one, I shall even go on board at the nearest landing-stage, and you may believe me, on my word as a tourist, that I have often gone very far afield to see less lovely views.

The start is made from the landing-stage near the Pont Napoléon, and on looking under the arches of the bridge one can see the works of the dam that protect the course of the stream, and the high chimney-stalks of the factories that look like Egyptian obelisks.

The boat is under way, and the shores fly past on either side like bands unwound, enabling one to behold many varied aspects of the banks. Bercy comes in sight with its rows of barrels upon the wharf, the houses bathed in sunshine, its shops, its signs in huge letters, and between the buildings groups of trees, above which rise a few tall poplars that, though the autumn is already well advanced, have retained their summer green. Besides, the weather is so mild that naked boys are bathing along the bank, or, up to the waist in the water, are fishing for stickle-backs with a handkerchief. Grooms are taking horses to water; women kneeling upon a handful of old straw are washing their linen in the river, for the suburban laundresses no longer come on their regular days with their little hand-carts, and Paris, in order to make sure of a clean shirt, has had to take up the washing business for itself.

The whole length of the quay is extremely full of life; people are going and coming, ascending and descending, carrying all manner of wares, piling up logs, storing up boards and beams in regular courses. This activity in the brilliant light has a look of joy, and in spite of the sad condition in which we find

ourselves, the sight of human activity under a fair sky is always cheerful. "What a blaze there would be if a shell lighted upon these piles of wood," said, near me on the boat, one of those prudent beings who are constantly foreseeing all sorts of misfortunes. — "Well, we should turn the river on it, — the easiest thing in the world."

It was long since I had come into this quarter, and the place looked like a new town to me. Men who knew the old Paris would find it difficult to recognise in the row of superb houses and sumptuous restaurants the old Quai de la Râpée, with its eating-houses daubed red all over like a toper's mug, that used to smile so ruddily through the foliage of the arbours and the shade of the chestnut trees. This place was famous for its fish chowders, and rowing men were accustomed to stop off here, proving that if they were fond of water they none the less liked wine, for at that time no one knew aught of absinthe, Angostura, vermouth, and other bitters eagerly sought for by people with ruined digestions. Beer was contemned, and Gambrinus had not dethroned Bacchus; people got tipsy on the generous juice of the grape, a truly French beverage. But modern luxury has done away

with these modest wine-shops, veritable nests of genuine gaiety.

At this point the Seine broadens out considerably and forms a basin in which sailing-boats formerly loved to tack to and fro, Asnières not being then fashionable. Just now this part of the river resembles the Grand Canal at Venice. The river craft have taken refuge within the city: great decked barges, shining with pitch, with a green stripe running round them as round the Dutch treschuits; ferry-boats fastened with wooden treenails, steamers, tug-boats, galliots, clippers, dinghies, gigs, yawls, shells, boats of every build. The upright masts ray the blue air with salmon-coloured tones, and at their trucks flutter tiny burgees blown out by the east wind that drives our letters beyond the ramparts and the forts, away above the enemy's spiked helmets. But in the midst of the peaceful fleet stand out vessels of grim and formidable appearance, their prows armed with rams like those of Roman galleys. The stern is sunk deep as if to make the bows rise out of water. Their plated sides, striated with port-holes, are painted a stern gray, and they look like orks in the midst of a school of herring, the resemblance being the closer on account

of some of these craft having, near the cutwater, a couple of black holes edged with red, that recall the eyes of certain fish. These are the gunboats charged with the duty of protecting the course and the banks of the stream.

The bridge at Bercy is a very elegant one, with its circular traceried openings; it spans the river gracefully with three or four arches.

As no rain has fallen for several weeks, the water is marvellously clear and presents to the blue expanse of heaven a perfectly clear mirror. Great smooth azure spaces and shimmering golden lights spread over the emerald-green surface and reminded me of the celestial serenity of Lake Leman. Ziem, William Wyld, and other masters of water-colour painting could have found there the suavity and delicacy of tones they seek in Venice, Constantinople, and Smyrna.

As we shot under the Pont d'Austerlitz, which leads to the Botanical Gardens, I smiled at the thought of the proposal, mentioned in the press as one of the more or less absurd means of defence suggested by the fertile imagination of inventors, namely, to let loose in the woods around Paris the lions, tigers, panthers, jaguars, and bears, black and white alike, from the menagerie.

Of course it would be necessary to provide each of the wild beasts with an album containing the uniforms of the Prussian army in colours, else they might unwittingly devour militiamen, regulars, and even francs-tireurs. Nor is this at all impracticable, since the Lion of Saint Mark, as every one knows, holds a book in its paw.

From the deck of the water omnibus we could see, upon the sloping beaches of the quays, national guards and militiamen drilling, going through the manual and manœuvring under the directions of their drill-masters, with indefatigable zeal. In more retired places, prentice drummers were beating their ass's-skins with yet imperfectly handled sticks, for it takes time to become a virtuoso of the *ra* and *fla*. What they performed best was the charge. Farther still, other prentices, buglers these, blew into their instruments with a persistency that involved their having lungs as powerful as those of Æolus of old. The roll of the drums and the clarion blasts were martially joyous; the bugle sounds loud, clear, and vigilant, like the crow of the cock.

The Isle Louviers, where of yore I used to scale the piles of lumber that stood, in our schoolboy battles, for

imaginary fortresses, no longer exists; it has been incorporated with the mainland and is now covered with houses. A few of the piles of the dam alone remain to recall the former appearance of the place. Here are Petit's Baths, where years ago, after severe tests, I won the right to wear the scarlet drawers, the aim of my secret ambitions, and the long Quai de l'Île Saint-Louis, where, on Sundays, Sainte-Beuve, the Sainte-Beuve of the *Consolations*, used to walk sunk in thought.

The Tournelle bridge, spoiled by a lot of little iron arches with which it has been adorned for the purpose of widening it, is soon left behind, and Notre-Dame de Paris comes in sight, its apse resting upon its flying-buttresses, and the two giant towers rising like arms ever raised in prayer. At the intersection of the nave the bold, traceried spire, with the cross surrounded with rays, that is to be seen in old engravings, has been restored. Formerly the place where it sprang was marked by a sheet of lead, the plaster on the cicatrice left by the amputation.

Nothing finer can be seen than the old cathedral which Victor Hugo adopted for the heroine of his epic, looked at from the level of the Seine and stand-

ing upon the point of the island, formed like a ship's prow, that cuts the river in two. A park of artillery has been installed in the square that had been laid out behind the apse, and Quasimodo's uncouth shade seems to gaze with amazement from the top of the towers upon these formidable engines of war, as if wondering whether a new assault is to be directed against his beloved Notre-Dame and whether it is not the secret intention of these gunners of the National Guard to carry off Esmeralda.

We shoot under the bridge which has replaced the Pont Rouge, and the remembrance of the latter recalls Barbara's dramatic novel, "The Murder on the Pont Rouge." The sound of drums and bugles is heard in the peaceful Île de Saint-Louis, startled at the warlike noise.

The steamer runs past the Quai de l'Hôtel de Ville, the silhouette of the building standing out against a background of utterly clear sky. Its diminished roofs have not the proud look Boccadoro had given them, but the mass of the building shows to advantage on the skyline. Somewhat back of it rises Saint-Gervais, with its façade by Jacques Desbrosses, rather overpraised, methinks. The landing stage is full of life: a crowd

of crafts surges against the quay; swimming-schools and cheap baths have moored there and form a most picturesque riot.

Soon the Théâtre-Lyrique and the Théâtre du Châtelet show up foreshortened above the skyline, with their Italian-like open loggia. On the other bank the Tribunal du Commerce exhibits its dome, which is intended to close the prospect at the foot of the Boulevard de Sébastopol. We pass like an arrow under the Pont Notre-Dame, entirely restored, but artists still regret its old square, slate-roofed tower, resting upon a maze of huge piles that obstructed one of the arches and forced the waters back along the quay under the Devil's Arch, a perilous spot, as dreaded by the boatmen of the Seine as is the Pont Saint-Esprit by the mariners of the Rhone. The memory of the old tower has been preserved in an admirable etching by Méryon, the Rembrandt of Old Paris. Next comes the Pont au Change, rebuilt and modernised, and the Palais de Justice shows with its Clock Tower, its pepper-pot roofed towers, its old walls pierced with mullioned windows, in which the newer portions, awkwardly set in, make unpleasant blotches. Yet it would have been so easy to adopt the style of the old

buildings for the needed additions, and thus to preserve the Gothic mien of that cradle of antique Lutetia that once was all there was of Paris.

The vessel travels so fast there is scarcely time to glance at the quaint masks carved by Germain Pilon under the cornice of the Pont Neuf. On turning round, however, a splendid view opens up. The Pont Neuf, with its peninsula on which rises the Chalet of the Vert-Galant, and the mass upon which stands on horseback the bronze king, forms the foreground. Behind, above the houses, rises Notre-Dame with its square towers and its pointed spire, the traceried and gilded spire of the Sainte-Chapelle and the pepper-pot turrets of the Palais de Justice. There is no finer view in the world.

In the opening formed by the Place de Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois shoots up the new belfry which serves as steeple to the old church, and which was to have been provided with one of those cheerful sets of Flemish chimes that change "into joyous song the serious voice of the Hours." Its white colour looks well against the background of blue sky.

And now comes the Louvre of Louis the Great, with its majestic colonnade by Perrault that was preferred to

the designs of the Cavalier Bernini, the Louvre of Henry IV and Henry II. Numerous workmen are busy blocking up the ground-floor windows with bags of earth, for there are the statues of antiquity, there blooms that divine type of beauty, that immortal piece of marble called the Venus of Milo. A large iron reservoir connected with the river, and fitted with a pipe leading to the roof, is installed on the quay. Alas! such precautions make one blush. One wonders whether time has not gone back, and whether the days of barbarism have returned. If the Venus of Milo were to be smashed, one of the suns of the ideal would disappear, and night would fall upon art. Such an outrage upon beauty, so monstrous a sacrilege, cannot be possible! Yet it must not be forgotten that the Count of Koenigsmark, who blew up the powder magazine in the Parthenon, hitherto intact, and who pointed the gun himself, was a Prussian. There is no greater crime than to mutilate Phidias, to destroy a masterpiece. Let us hope that the splendid deity, who is no Venus but a Victory, will know how to defend herself.

On the other side of the river, at the end of the Pont des Arts, the peaceful Institute is also taking

precautions against possible consequences of the siege. The helmeted Minerva, which forms the crest upon its programmes, has lowered her visor, for Minerva, the goddess of Wisdom, is armed, and besides her helmet, her ægis, her buckler, and her lance, she has at her side the night-owl, the faithful watcher, from whom darkness has nothing hid. Prudently inspired by its Athenian protectress, the Institute has blocked up the windows of the Mazarin Library with bags of earth, and placed in the courts huge iron tanks full of water. Let us hope that no projectiles will smash in the cupola under which have been spoken so many harangues full of allusions, insinuations, and epigrammatic praises. Formerly, as may be seen in the contemporary engravings by Israel Sylvestre, that portion of the quay which formed a sort of substructure of the Institute was adorned with trophies and carvings that were very effective, and the disappearance of which is to be regretted.

At the corner of the Pont du Carrousel, on the Quai Saint-Nicolas, are working experimentally very powerful steam fire-engines. White steam bursts from the funnel, and the hose, a long leathern serpent with brazen head, sends out a jet of water, big, strident,

impetuous as a cloudburst, that, with the sound of a rocket, rises as high as the jets of the fountains of Saint-Cloud or the Tuileries and then falls in silvery spray. There were several of these fire-engines at work, and they were throwing the water to a great distance. They will quickly extinguish any blaze started by shells and petroleum shells, if these destructive engines of war manage to reach us. Numerous spectators, leaning upon the quay wall and the railing of the bridge, were watching the performance with very natural interest.

The working of fire-engines did not interfere with the drummers and buglers who were practising in the garden of the Vigier Baths, the clumps of trees in which, still green, break so pleasantly the architectural lines of the Tuileries. The martial sounds recalled one's thoughts to the war which the serene beauty of the prospect might well have relegated far from stern reality.

Opposite the Vigier Baths, behind a wash-house, at the foot of the quay wall, is situated a shanty always surmounted by a plume of smoke, and to which attention is drawn by the new lumber of which it is built. It is a pumping station working directly from the Seine with the object of supplying the quarters on the left bank in

the event of the foe cutting the Ourcq canal. You see that everything has been provided for.

Near the Pont Royal, opposite the Café d'Orsay, the training frigate, transformed into a hydropathic establishment, with its tall masts, its rigging, and its yards, from which hang coloured metal balls, imparts to this nook a very picturesque maritime air, and makes one think of the plan to turn Paris into a seaport, a plan that could have been carried out at less cost than a year of barren and destructive war.

How rich is the aspect, when lighted by this fine autumn sun and when seen from below, — a point of view that always improves the lines and produces new effects, — up the recently rebuilt pavilion at the corner of the Tuileries, which still preserves its golden whiteness. Carpeaux' figures and groups, smitten by the warm light, stand out from the façade with amazing intensity of life. The sculptor seems to live and move. The young woman kneeling and parting the foliage, and accompanied by little genii, is of flesh and not stone, a fact that may tell against the reposefulness of the architecture, which prefers that the guests it lodges on its pediments, archivolts, and friezes, should maintain quiet and symmetrical attitudes. Now from this point

of view it is not to be denied that Carpeaux' figures are regular romps, but then life in art is a quality of such supreme value that everything may be pardoned for its sake.

On the top of the Clock Pavilion flies the flag of the Geneva International Society, a cross gules on a field argent. The palace has been transformed into an ambulance, and in the gardens the statues by Coysevox, Coustou, Lepautre, and Théodon gaze with surprised looks out of their great white eyes upon the parks of artillery, the cannons, bronze dogs of war that are but too eager to bark, the tents within which the soldiers take refuge, and upon all the warlike array which Paris ought never to have beheld. For was not Paris the neutral city above all others? The real capital of the world? The very brain and eye of the Universe? Above the trees circle the pigeons disturbed in their habits, and the sparrows ask each other in their language what has become of the *charmer*. Meanwhile the Sebastopol sphinxes and Barye's lions, impassible sentries in marble and bronze, go on keeping watch and ward.

What a wonderful basin is that formed by the Seine between the Pont Royal and the Pont de la Concorde!

On the right, above the quay, the Tuileries terrace, with its pilastered balustrade and its crown of great trees, the green of which autumn has tinted with saffron; on the left, the Palace d'Orsay, the pretty palazzino of the Legion of Honour, the Spanish Embassy, the Cercle agricole, and, seen in profile, so as to face the Madeleine, the Palace of the Corps Législatif (Chamber of Deputies, or Palais-Bourbon), which in the distance has somewhat the look of a Greek temple. Of course it is not the Parthenon, but at a distance and with the magical effects of light and of perspective and the breaking of the lines due to the silhouette of the trees massed near the bridge, the effect on the horizon is incomparably charming. In the background the hills of Meudon and Sèvres swell, blurred and softened in the bluish haze, with a sweetness of tone that recalls the backgrounds of Claude Lorrain.

While the steamer is proceeding down stream, leaving behind it a foaming wake, the guns and artillery waggons swing along the quay at a rapid trot with the thundering roar of the car of Capanea storming across the brazen bridge, and the bayonets of regiments on the march shine in the sun like the ears of a harvest

of steel. The rhythmic beat of the drum and the ringing clarion blast accompany one everywhere; unparalleled military activity is everywhere evident, and the time for dreaming has passed away.

Nevertheless, all this bustle fails to disturb the fishermen, for rod fishers are naturally philosophical and phlegmatic. I saw great numbers of them between Bercy and the Point-du-Jour; some were in the water half-way up to their knees, like herons on the watch; others were standing in the bows of a boat; others were seated, their legs dangling over a quay wall; others again were perched on the cornice of a bridge; but every one of them was watching with the most intense attention the bobbing of a cork float or rebaiting his hook, no doubt in order to justify the rather harsh axiom: "A fishing rod is a tool with a worm at one end and a fool at the other."

These worthy people did not appear to be troubling their heads with thoughts of the Prussians, and had shells fallen into the water by them they would have merely remarked, "This sort of thing will frighten away the fish."

It may be that among them there are those who see in this innocent occupation an opportunity of adding a

dish of fish to the somewhat monotonous siege bill of fare, but the others fish with disinterested enthusiasm, hopelessly, as is the case with every genuine passion. They never catch anything, yet they always return. I did, however, see a fortunate fisherman bring up at the end of his line a gudgeon a couple of inches long that squirmed like a silver flash.

Beyond the Pont de la Concorde the Seine forms a slight bend, on the one side of which is the Hôtel de la Présidence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and on the other the drives of the Cours-la-Reine, topped by the glazed roof of the Palace of Industry, which look like the domes of some huge hot-house glittering in the sun. The fine lines of the quay impart to the prospect a grandiose and monumental aspect that leaves an impression of solemnity.

At the Pont de l'Alma we salute the Zouave and the linesman carved with proud port upon the piles, who appear to be guarding the stream against the approach of the foe; we salute also the dome of the Invalides, damascened with gold, like a Saracen helmet, and which is seen shining in the heavens when one turns to look back towards Paris. It has been recommended to dull the gilding with a coat of wash. Let it not be done!

Who would dare to fire upon the refuge of the crippled brave? And besides, what would the Invalides care if they did bear one more cicatrice?

Horses led by their riders are coming down the quay slopes on the side of the Military school to bathe or drink in the stream. Handsome indeed are these noble animals which share man's perils, when ridden bare-backed and led by soldiers in linen trousers, whose shirts fall into folds like the chlamys of antiquity when the wind is blowing. In these groups one comes across the simple yet proud turns seen on the metopes of the Parthenon, and since there is no Phidias here, why does not a Géricault come along? What models he would find among these horses that are coming and going and some of whom rear as they feel the coldness of the water. There were mules also, easily known by their long ears, and worthy of drawing the car of the Princess Nausicaa on her way to the bath. Let us not despise these useful animals that stand fatigue so well: they transport the heavy baggage and the wounded, who balance each other on the litters. If they do not go to glory, they do go to hard work, and we should not forget it. Oxen with curved legs, to quote the fine Homeric expression, standing on the bank of the

river, are raising their heads with a look of vague anxiety, and the water drips in long streams from their shining mouths.

On the Jena bridge, that, like most of our bridges,—Austerlitz, Arcole, Solferino, Alma,—bears the name of one of our victories, regiments of the line are passing on their way to the heights of Chaillot, and down the quay, in the direction of the Commissariat, itself in full blast, ride squadrons of gendarmerie. Everything speaks of war and preparations for defence; even the four equestrian groups on the approaches to the Jena bridge seem to be neighing and breathing in the smell of powder.

The troops start from the Champ de Mars, on which stand long rows of wooden huts intended to shelter the soldiers. The whole extent of that vast space has been transformed into a camp, and no one could believe that scarcely three years ago rose on that same spot the huge iron and glass Babel called the Palace of the Universal Exposition. In the mazes of that colossal building were stored the wonders of civilisation and peace, the highest efforts of human genius; art rubbed elbows with industry; white statues stood by the side of black engines, and paintings were displayed close by

the rich stuffs of the East; for the great artists of every country had sent on their finest pictures, the masterpieces to which they owed their fame. Every nation had endeavoured to exhibit its very best. To walk under the lofty arches of that cathedral of labour was to pass from wonder to wonder, and as one beheld the innumerable prodigies one felt pride in being a man. So lofty was the vaulting that an engine was needed to enable one to ascend to it, and the roof, with its red arcading framing in the blue heaven, impressed one with the same sense of immensity as does the Coliseum at Rome.

Round the monstrous edifice were scattered in lovely flower gardens, that had sprung up from the ground like fairy settings at the whistle of the scene-setter, Egyptian temples, their pylones covered with hieroglyphs, mosques, okkels, konaks, palaces like unto those of *The Thousand and One Nights*, in the purest Arab style, Swiss chalets, Russian isbas, Norwegian fishermen's huts, Chinese pagodas, Japanese houses, shops for the sale of Protestant Bibles, and even a facsimile reproduction of the Roman catacombs. I need not recall the beer-gardens in which Vienna and Munich poured out their inexhaustible stores of beer, the Al-

gerian cafés with their droning, nasal music, the bewitching strains of the Hungarian gipsies, the Aïssouas who ate fire and snakes; it was the great world's fair alongside the Universal Exposition, the smaller drama by the greater. There was nothing lacking, not even the equestrian statue of King William, which we were polite enough not to consider too ridiculous; not even the famous Krupp gun with which we are threatened and which we did not greatly admire, for those were the days of the fine, peaceful contests that do honour to the human mind, and no one supposed that that frightful engine of war was ever to be put to use.

Emperors, kings, sultans, and princes came with jealous politeness to visit the fair city, the object of their secret envy, and Paris gave them splendid entries and welcomed them with its brightest smile, never dreaming of the rancour excited by its splendour.

Who could believe now that on this empty space, strewn with straw here and there, and from which the smoke of bivouac fires is rising, once stood the dream-like fairy building? Near as the time is, it seems as if ages had elapsed since that day. It was too fair to last. The Moiræ, the stern deities whom the pride of men and nations offends, enjoy wrecking such deceitful

prosperity and urge it on to ruin with their own skinny hands. But misfortune strengthens brave hearts, and we shall emerge victorious from the struggle.

On the slope of the Trocadero, climbed by a broad flight of steps that recalls the stairway of the Propylæa at Athens, but which unfortunately, does not lead to the divine portico of Mnesicles, are assembled innumerable inquisitive people endeavouring with the aid of glasses and telescopes, to ascertain whether in the distance it is upon a Prussian helmet or rifle that the sun is glittering. For this is the crowning interest that keeps every one breathless, —to catch at least a glimpse of the invisible enemy that has hemmed us in a mysterious circle.

The beacon factory has upon its tower-top a semaphore, the flags of which are even now sending a signal. What mean these bits of vari-coloured bunting that are being run up and down? Is the enemy approaching? Must we hasten to the ramparts? At least we hope that the key to their meaning is not known to Bismarck's spies.

Now we slide by the Île aux Cygnes, shoot under the Pont de Grenelle, and the banks of the river assume a more pastoral appearance. Clumps of trees

alternate with the houses; the stalks of factory chimneys become more frequent; restaurants and wine-shops are seen, with their little gardens divided off into green arbours; numerous flotillas of boats and punts are moored under the banks, and there are to be seen also two or three gunboats, which at once impart seriousness to a landscape that would gladly be a smiling one only.

At last the viaduct of the Point-du-Jour comes in sight, with its elegant super-imposed arcades that bear on their topmost range the belt line of railway. It is a work worthy of the Romans, and that recalls the wondrous Pont du Gard. Nothing could well be more noble, more solid, and yet more light. The breeze blows unimpeded through the broad arches that frame in the hills of Meudon and of Sèvres, those countless lovely spots, beloved of painters and poets, that are forbidden ground to us — but not for long. I shall not speak of the formidable defences that bristle upon the viaduct and its approaches, but even now we may, quoting Shakespeare, say to the Prussians: —

> "Now near enough; your leafy screens throw down,
> And show like those you are."

III

THE PLACE SAINT-PIERRE-MONTMARTRE

October, 1870.

THE wonderful blue sky that shone so radiantly upon our gloom has at last had the decency to veil its face; it has done as our women have done: substituted for the bright colours of its dress the gray and black shades that are more appropriate to the serious situation we are in, and lo and behold, we have all taken to regretting the blue heavens. What had seemed to us irony, we now look upon as consolation.

I had planned to watch the departure of the balloon-post, that carries off in its car bundles of those letters written upon thinnest paper, to which, alas! we never get any replies. This very morning a fierce wind was blowing away torn and livid clouds as if they were rags snatched from the lines of the drying-grounds. Weird moanings rose with the whirls of dried leaves switched from the tossing trees, and through the roar of the gale,

the creaking of the vanes, the slamming of doors and shutters, the rolling of carriages hastening homewards, was heard the deep bass of the distant artillery fire. It was just the sort of weather when even a man not given to over indulgence in comfort, is minded to repeat, while snuggling under the blankets, the line of the Latin elegiacal poet: —

Quam juvat immites ventos audire cubantem !

But I had an appointment with a friend who was awaiting me on the Place Saint-Pierre-Montmartre, and so I bravely set out.

Gloomy indeed was that dull and dismal autumn day, which showed the surrounding objects without lighting or shading them. Everything looked dirty, washed out; all trace of colour had vanished, forms were shapeless and looked as if cut out of the flat. The city, tired out by its war night-watch, had not yet risen; along the whole length of the Rue Richelieu there were scarcely two or three cabs to be seen showing black upon the gray paving-stones. Nothing else was visible. Squads of militiamen on their way to their appointed posts, and of National Guards marching to the drill-ground or to the ramparts, alone en-

livened the loneliness of the early morning. Here and there a shop was opening one of its shutters like a heavy eyelid. A very few pedestrians were beginning to move along close by the walls, walking with timid, furtive step as if afraid of the echo they aroused. The impression made upon me was strange and undefinable; I seemed to be in one of those cities of *The Thousand and One Nights* in which all life has been suspended by the spells of a mighty enchanter. But the word that is to break the spell will soon be known and the brilliant bustle will spread abroad again.

On my trip down the Seine I had enjoyed the closing splendours of summer, and now I was on my way to Montmartre amid the sad aspects of autumn.

After climbing the pretty steep streets built upon the slopes of the hill, I at last reached the place where has been pitched the balloonist's camp, and while I was trying to find, with the help of my glasses, the friend who was to secure me admission into the enclosure, I was suddenly surrounded by a patrol of National Guards. My using glasses had awakened suspicion, and I was asked, very politely, I must own, to show my papers. On my exhibiting a pass in proper

form, I was allowed to move about as I pleased. Besides, one of the men had recognised and identified me. I have no fault to find with the vigilance displayed by them, and it is plain that henceforth the Prussians will seek in vain to take us by surprise.

The Place Saint-Pierre-Montmartre slopes somewhat, for it has kept the gradient of the hill on which it is built. On two sides it is surrounded by houses, some of which bear on their dead walls advertisements in those huge letters so dear to the hearts of tradesmen. The third side is formed by the scarp of the hill itself, with its marl, clay, and ochre hues. Sentries are patrolling and crossing on the narrow paths that score the slope of the hill. On the very crest of the height stands a house, and near it rises the Solferino Tower, with the top story cut down for siege purposes, and now surmounted by a semaphore. At the foot, in a corner, are stored away acrobats' caravans that recall the green box in which dwelt Ursus, Gwynplaine, and Dea, while the brave wolf Homo kept watch and ward over them. There is also a merry-go-round, the wooden horses of which are stabled in a shed. These sports and caravans, the homes of freaks, the stands on which the clowns paraded at

suburban fairs to the strains of rag-time music, present a melancholy contrast. The fourth and lowest side of the place is devoted to a market.

In the centre of the square, on a piece of empty ground roped-in, stand three tents: one for the soldiers, the second for the Jack tars, and the third for the aeronauts. A pipe running to the gas main makes a black line across the surface, and with a few planks and empty barrels constitutes the whole of the apparatus. Nothing could well be simpler.

My friend takes me into the enclosure. The white balloon, already filled with gas, and looking like a huge, bossy pearl, of the kind called irregular, flattens and swells under the pressure of the wind, which is still very high. A ring of men, some belonging to the crew, some sailors, some soldiers, some aeronauts, and some living in the neighbourhood, who are helping with their strong arms, are hanging on to the mooring lines and holding to earth the vast globe eager to take flight and shaking the ballast with which it is being heavily loaded. A mechanical engineer, the author of many remarkable discoveries, Mr. F——, and a pigeon fancier with his cage of pigeons, now take their places in the car, in which are already lashed the

bags of letters, newspapers, and despatches. The word "Let go!" is given; the balloon, freed from its bonds, shoots up, sways to and fro, is caught by the wind, and ascends with startling rapidity as if drawn upwards by a whirlwind.

As I watched the white sphere rising and growing smaller in the gray heavens, Victor Hugo's fine lines, so appropriate at the present time, recurred to my mind: —

"Audacity of man! Effort of the prisoner! Sacred wrath! A breaking-out, in fine, that is mightier than the cage! What needs this being, broad-browed atom, to overcome the endless, the boundless, the unfathomable, to master the winds, the storm, the foam, the avalanche? In the heavens but a sheet, on the waves but a board."

Yes, said I to myself, the breaking-out is mightier than the cage; the foe that fancied he had shut us up within a speechless tomb, walled us up within a sepulchre, has been unable to close up our vault with a slab. Our prison has the heavens for a roof, and it is impossible to invest the heavens. The swarming blackness of the invaders cannot corner the blue, and thanks to the balloon, man, freed from his old-time weight,

is winged like the bird. A bold navigator, he starts upon his frail wicker skiff and crosses that ocean bluer even than the other, once the foam of clouds that falls back upon the earth has been passed.

And with the aeronaut go our thoughts also, our good wishes for the beloved absent ones, the outpourings of our hearts, all there is of good, tender, and delicate in human souls. On a piece of thin paper more than one man, who affects to smile stoically, has dropped a tear. Shall we ever again see those to whom we write, now that the letter-box is a balloon and the postman the wind? It depends on the caprices of cannon-balls and the chance of shells. It may be that the beloved head for whom these minute signs have been traced upon paper so thin that a breath would blow it away, has fallen pale and languid upon the pillow from which it will never rise again. And what can be more painful than a letter written to the dead? But away with such gloomy thoughts, and let us trust in a happier fate and a more auspicious future. Did not hope remain at the bottom of Pandora's box for the very purpose of consoling unfortunate humanity?

Everywhere in the air the intrepid balloons are cross-

ing, soaring higher than the range of the Prussian bullets and laughing at their projectiles. There are Nadar's, Dartois', and Yon's aeroscaphs, Godard's and Wilfrid de Fonvielle's balloons starting from different points and borne by the wind beyond the ring in which we are shut up. They are going to tell the provinces that the heart of Paris beats even yet, and that France, when it storms up to our walls, will find us thin and hungry, no doubt, but alive and resolute, and for the matter of that, she will bring us food; they will tell every one of those we love and from whom we have had to part in this terrible trial, that we do not forget them and that the day of deliverance is drawing nigh.

The balloon had long since vanished, and a fine rain, that penetrated overcoats with its minute drizzle, was beginning to fall. I was taken to the Élysée-Montmartre, both that I might find shelter and that I might see all the details of the making of the balloons in that building, which has been converted into a factory for aerostats. The Élysée-Montmartre is a sort of suburban Mabille, or rather it was, for no one now thinks of dancing. The garden in which it stands is filled with plaster copies of mythological statues painted

in oils, and which shiver in their nudity in the October wind. On wet nights the choregraphic eccentricities of the Brididis and *grisettes* of the suburbs took place in an immense hall, in which the workshops have been installed.

The walls are ornamented with paintings in distemper representing architectural framework in which are set exotic plants and flowers. Behind the orchestra is a semicircular temple with white pillars, standing out against a background of sombre verdure. The chandeliers are still hanging from the ceiling, their gilding nearly worn off, and with red and green metallic spangle-balls in place of ground glass shades. Dancing-halls are never gay in the daytime, the light of the sun being as injurious to them as to women. But the Élysée-Montmartre, animated as it was with work, presented, in spite of the gloominess of the day, a most interesting and lively appearance.

Some sixty work-girls, most of them young, some of them pretty, and every one dressed with coquettish neatness, were working with their feet the pedals of the sewing-machines that buzzed, so that one might easily have been led into the mistake, just like the old spinning-wheels. O spinning-wheel of Marguerite's, " patient

and dull work," slow labour of the needle, that inspired Thomas Hood with the "Song of the Shirt," how completely you have been distanced by this progressive age. With what dazzling swiftness the steel point used to flash into the stuff and was wont to unite with a hem of the most undeniable regularity the two pieces presented to it! Poor woman's hand, in your less certain work one felt the quiver of life; but nowadays you are counted inapt and cannot struggle against the swift, indefatigable, and accurate machine. Happily the metal sewer needs a handmaiden to cut its work out, for it cannot see what its steel fingers do, and there exists no cog-wheel that can take the place of the brain.

In this same immensely long hall was a ropeworks and a manufactory of netting. Netting plays a most important part in aerostatics. It forms a sort of covering with very wide meshes round the main circumference and lozenge-shaped meshes at the top and the bottom of the balloon, which, when inflated, looks like a huge spinning-top. The utmost care is required in the preparation of the netting, for it has to confine the silk or calico capsule, filled with gas, and to prevent its distending too rapidly or forming pockets or blisters.

In two other rooms that open out into the main hall, and that no doubt were formerly used as bars and refreshment rooms, are cut out on long tables, by the help of patterns made of stout paper, the various pieces which, when put together, form the balloon. They are exactly like slices of cantelope melons or the degrees of longitude on hemispheres.

Having inspected this workshop, Nadar took me to the Northern Railway Station, where the balloons are varnished. How silent and deserted are these splendid spaces, where not long ago all was bustle on the arrival and departure of trains and the wheeling of luggage and parcels. Militiamen are drilling in the yard, the gates to which are closed. It is as impossible to go to Enghien to-day as to Timbuctoo or the sources of the White Nile.

In the waiting-room soldiers and sailors, their shirt-sleeves rolled up, are busy covering with a varnish composed of thick oil, litharge, and india-rubber, the balloon which is to start to-morrow. The gas is always tending to escape from the envelope in which it is contained and to allow the entrance of an equivalent quantity of the atmosphere in which it happens to be, in virtue of the phenomenon called *endosmos* by physi-

cists, which explains the conductivity between cells. In order to dry the varnish, the balloons are inflated by means of an eolipile, with the aid of a wheel fitted with paddles, which, when turned by a handle, drives the air into the interior of the distended sphere. Nadar, Dartois, and Yon have contracted to turn out one balloon a day, and even more if necessary.

At this time everybody has taken to gazing into the heavens; no one thinks of anything but balloons, and people keep watching the wind and investigating the confines of the sky. Crack-brained inventors and experts are equally bent on discovering a way to steer balloons. Victor Hugo, in "The Open Sky," has described his idea of what a dirigible balloon should be, and M. Dupuy de Lôme, the skilful builder of ironclads and monitors, has been sketching in chalk upon the blackboard of the Institute of France his plan of a similar engine.

All this feverish excitement goes to show that we should dearly like to have answers to our letters, and that failing a balloon to bring them, a dove that should arrive with them, written in microscopic characters, under its wing, would be more welcome than was the dove that returned to the Ark with the green bough in

its bill. There is, of course a simpler way of getting at our desire, and that is to drive the Prussians in proper shape beyond their German Rhine, and to get our letters in the good old way through the post. Let us hope that this will be the method adopted.

Then, perhaps, after all these researches, we may light upon the great secret discovered by the sparrow that flies up from the pavement on to the tiles of the roofs. And humanity, that has so long been shouting, "Give me wings! Wings!" as in Rückert's song, will at last be satisfied. Having made itself mistress of the sea and the land, it will seize upon the dominions of the air, for every striving of the soul is bound to be successful.

IV

A TURN ON THE RAMPARTS

October, 1870.

THERE is nothing that so thoroughly develops the notion of locomotion as the consciousness that it is impossible to emerge out of a given circle. This is why many a man who was formerly perfectly satisfied to walk from the corner of the Rue Drouot to the corner of the Rue du Helder, and who left to the Mungo Parks of the boulevard the chimerical regions of the Madeleine and the Bastille, now has himself driven to the extreme points of the circumference wherein we are shut up, and gazes with envious eye upon the boundless space that extends beyond the ramparts. Auber himself, the Parisian of Parisians, is hankering to travel. When a balloon is starting one would gladly enough take a seat in the car by the side of the aeronaut, not to escape from the enemy, the Spartan siege broth, and the chances of shells, but simply in order to get

across the bounds, to be free for a brief space, and to soar to the other side of the Prussian lines.

Yielding to this very natural desire, and favoured, besides, by a superb autumnal day, I start with a friend for the landing-stage at the Pont Royal. The little river steamer shortly arrives, gracefully cutting the waters with its prow and crowned with a plume of white smoke, and in our turn we are speedily installed upon the deck, in a snug corner, sheltered from the wind, which, notwithstanding the bright sun, is rather sharp. I have already taken my readers on this little river trip, the longest we may indulge in, and we shall therefore land at once by the Pont Napoléon, where the boats now stop.

The bridge, at once bold and elegant, supports both a railway line and a road: the Belt line and the military road. Within the past few days a second line of rails, intended for the service of the ramparts, has been laid upon the road itself and forms a powerful auxiliary to the defensive works. It has been laid with a rapidity that would astonish the Americans even, quick workers as they are.

The roadway of the bridge is reached by a broad flight of stone steps. The two lines of metals are

divided by a fence of cast-iron plates adorned with a few arabesques. On the parapet that looks towards Charenton bags of earth have been symmetrically ranged, and a fairly large embrasure enables one to look out upon the river, the course of which is barred by three rows of piles, boats laid endwise, and pontoons, the whole guarded by a gunboat. The sky is milky white, and sad-looking in spite of its splendour. The intensity of the light makes objects appear of a sombre hue. As far as the eye can reach the solitude is complete. Numerous factory chimney-stalks rise in this quarter, resembling a forest of granite obelisks, but from one only is there any smoke issuing. On the river, usually so busy, there is not a trace of any boats. At the end of the bridge the rampart, interrupted to allow of the passage of the river, extends its line anew.

Before going farther it may be well to describe somewhat in detail the component parts of the ramparts of a fortified city. Of course everybody knows what they are, but, like Mr. Jourdain, who, when he was asked whether he understood Latin, replied, "Yes, but explain, just as if I did not," more than one of my readers may not object to a short explanation — which does not come from me. The art of

Vauban and Cohorn is unknown to me, and in this respect I am as learned as Jodelet, who was not satisfied with the taking of the half-moon at Arras and insisted that it was a full one. I therefore borrow the following passage from Adolphe Joanne's excellent "Guide to the Environs of Paris":

"The fortifications of Paris are divided into two parts: the *enceinte* and the detached forts. The enceinte is composed of a military street, a rampart, a moat and a glacis. It is provided with bastions. The military street which runs along the whole of the inner side of the enceinte is on the level of the ground. It is sixteen feet four inches wide, with six foot berms, and is macadamised, save in a few places where it is paved. It is planted with trees along its whole length. Next come the earthworks or ramparts, which comprise: 1st, the *terreplein*, which is connected with the road by an inner slope; 2d, the *steps* or *banquettes*, on which in time of siege stand the soldiers who are engaged in firing; 3d, the *parapet*, rising higher than the banquettes and protecting the defenders; it is sixteen feet four inches thick. The wall or revetment of masonry that supports all this earthwork, is covered by an external slope. The *wall*

itself is thirty-two feet eight inches high, and eleven feet six inches thick on an average. It is backed at intervals of sixteen feet by masses of masonry that run for six feet into the earthwork of the parapet. The *scarp* forms one of the sides of the moat, which is forty-nine feet wide, and down the centre of which runs a trench five feet wide, and of similar depth, for the purpose of draining the water, and called the *cunette*. The other side of the ditch is called the *counterscarp*; on the inner side it consists of a slope of earth at a gradient of forty-five degrees. Beyond the moat the ground is so arranged as to cover the masonry work of the scarp, and this outer earthwork is called the *glacis*.

"The enceinte is composed of a series of broken lines with re-entrant and salient angles. The salient angles form what are called *bastions*, and behind are the *curtains*. An ensemble of bastions and curtains is called a *front*. Almost all the fronts of the enceinte of Paris form a straight line. And, in virtue of a well known axiom in fortification, a series of fronts in a straight line is inattackable."

I like that axiom, and I hope the truth of it will ere long be proved. Now let us proceed along the

military street, which was almost deserted in the old days, and which is so full of bustle at the present time.

The rampart which I have just described represents the enceinte in time of peace, when it is not armed for defence, a thing no one ever supposed would become necessary. And poor M. Thiers had to stand a tremendous fire of more or less witty chaff, of projectiles shot through the pea-shooters of the minor press, because he proposed to fortify Paris. Everybody smiled at the thought of seeing an enemy surrounding Paris, so wildly improbable did the notion seem. The Opposition pretended that the sole use of the enceinte would be to shut Paris up, and that the forts would fire upon rioters instead of repelling a chimerical invasion. Besides, it was said, the best rampart for a city is one made of the breasts of brave men; there was Sparta, for instance, that had no ramparts. But, on the other hand, Athens, which was not less brave, had ramparts! And to-day the fortifications that were so ridiculed of yore have proved our salvation.

It is not to be expected that the science of modern defence, which makes use only of straight lines, of salient and re-entrant angles, which sinks as far as pos-

sible its constructions to the level of the ground, should produce the picturesque aspect of the mediæval fortresses, with their round and square towers, their look-outs, their watch-boxes, their pepper-pot turrets, and their pointed roofs: defences that were formidable to look at, and which were invaluable against arrows, mangonels, and catapults, but which could not stand up against artillery. Nevertheless these mathematical lines have a certain grim beauty of their own; their rigorous logic satisfies the eye without the need of the seductiveness of form. There is plainly nothing there but what is necessary, and the set configuration of the useful cannot help having a charm of its own. So I looked with a certain amount of pleasure upon the clean, sharp line of the crest of the rampart that stood out strongly against the luminous whiteness of the sky, upon the slopes of the earth-works, the rows of banquettes upon which the sentries were walking with shouldered arms, at this great ensemble of simple, but unquestionably grand lines, so calmly strong, and I felt the satisfaction which a successful piece of work imparts.

On the outer edge of the parapet are ranged sand-bags, so placed as to leave openings for the chassepots,

on which the sunlight at times sets a spangle of light ere fire breaks out from them. These lighted spaces in the sombre wall produce a very singular and picturesque effect.

At the foot of the slope are built casemates. These are huts, the walls formed of posts, with a roof of heavy beams covered with thick layers of earth that make them bomb-proof. The walls of the huts are themselves protected by a covering of earth and turf, and the general aspect recalls that of a Celtic tumulus, or rather the facsimile of the Roman catacombs that was on view at the Universal Exposition of 1867. They are entered by a narrow semicircular passage, which protects the soldiers inside from the splinters of shells.

The whole of the work has been carried out with the greatest care and method. In the spaces between the casemates are placed barrels, fascines, and sandbags, to shelter the defenders on the ramparts from the bursting shells. At varying distances the guns project their bronze muzzles out of the embrasures. Heavier guns than those on the curtains are mounted on the angles of the bastions, ready to sweep the plain with a cross-fire if, which is most improbable, the enemy should

manage to make his way in between two of the forts.

At certain intervals rise the customs-barracks, solid, grim-looking buildings that harmonise well with the fortifications. Various defensive services are installed in them. Besides the crenelated, loop-holed walls, the epaulements, the palisades, and the chevaux de frise, the gates are provided with drawbridges that are lowered in the morning and raised at night. Paris, of yore so hospitable, is now difficult to approach. Through these gates were re-entering marauders, perhaps poor people who had gone, at the peril of their lives, to reap under the Prussian bullets what is left of their crops. They were laden with bags of potatoes, cabbages, and other vegetables, bits of board, poles and small faggots, — wretched flotsam and jetsam, poor spoil! There were old men and old women, a few young girls and children whose ragged and tattered garments would have made Callot take up his graver, and the equivalent and model of which can be seen in the clever etcher's "The Miseries of War."

Posts of National Guards kept watch and ward upon the rampart, allowing no one to come near and carrying out their prudently rigorous orders. The sentries

marched up and down on the banquette with sloped arms, or remained motionless as statues scanning the horizon. At the foot of the slope squads of men were drilling and learning to handle chassepots or rifles with side breech blocks. Others were playing at chuck-farthing,—a game very much in favour in this time of siege, for it serves to while away innocently the long tedious hours of duty. These improvised soldiers had a firm and assured mien, and it was plain that they meant to do their duty in the hour of danger. None of the songs and shouts of the early days were to be heard, none of the excitement was visible; the mob had been turned into an army, so much could be seen at a glance.

Then, as if to bring back my thoughts to the situation itself, smoke would rise from time to time from Fort Ivry, whirling against the sky, and the roar of the gun came deep and sonorous upon the wings of the wind. It is a shell fired at some Prussian hiding-place.

So far, I have described the rampart merely. Now let us take a look at the other side of the military street, which is just as interesting. The walls of the houses and of the gardens, the latter topped by the

leafless branches of trees yellowed by autumn, are covered with huge posters either printed or stamped. Shelters covered with oil or tarred cloth form a refuge for the National Guards in the event of rain. On great gray cloth tents are the words, — *Official Canteen*. Here and there are stalls of dealers of eatables and drinkables. A girl, young, pretty, and fair, coquettishly attired in a fancy vivandière dress, and wearing a tri-colour scarf round her waist, had drawn numerous customers to her open-air bar. Some distance away a competitor was already trying to diminish the girl's success, but in vain: the rival was dark, and lacked the other's roguish archness.

The new deal boarding of the huts intended for the militiamen contrasted with the gray hues of the old buildings, and here and there a few tents recalled the bivouacs. The blackened traces of smoke showed that the order not to build fires against the garden walls had not been obeyed, and heaps of ashes and half-consumed logs between two paving-stones or two bricks pointed to the sites of improvised kitchens. A fascine factory, a regular siege business, had been set up within a spacious piece of waste ground. Heavily laden waggons were sinking deeper the ruts in the street,

the macadam of which was being repaired, and the startled horses pricked up their ears as the locomotive engines and waggons, which were not fenced off from the street, came rolling by.

Starting from the river the road goes on rising and climbing on an easy gradient, but on turning round at the spot where it runs level again, one can see down below, beyond the Seine, in the bluish haze of the distance, Saint-Mandé and the wood and the fortress of Vincennes; one can clearly see also the donjon and the great entrance tower. Through a silvery haze, flushed with light, the outline of the fort and the château of Bicêtre are visible above the rampart. The fort was just then firing upon an objective that was invisible to us, and great round clouds of smoke were breaking out of the embrasures.

An admiral, or rear-admiral, I will not answer for his rank, followed by three staff officers on horseback, was engaged in visiting the posts in a coupé. He ascended the banquette of the rampart, examined the horizon for a moment, appeared to be satisfied with the prospect, and went off again.

I had reached the Avenue d'Italie, filled with a great concourse of carriages, carts, cabs, pedestrians, idlers,

sightseers, women carrying bundles, dealers in drinks and food. I felt somewhat tired, so proceeded to the nearest station on the Belt Line, the Maison-Blanche station. In time of siege, when one is hermetically shut up, it is quite a pleasant sensation to take a railway ticket: one feels as if one were going off; as if one were free.

V

THE BELT LINE

October, 1870.

THE Maison-Blanche station is on the level of the Avenue d'Italie, and you have to go down to the railway itself, situated at the bottom of a cutting, by an iron stair covered with an iron roof supported by cast-iron pillars. I had taken an outside seat, on the top of the carriage, so as to enjoy a wider view, and the same notion had occurred to many more, for there were but few passengers in the carriages; on the open-air seats were militiamen, National Guards, bourgeois, idlers, children, and even women who had not been dismayed by the climb, for curiosity stands Eve's daughters in lieu of courage, and they will climb anywhere if there is the least chance of seeing something.

The whole of this part of the Belt Line is constructed with the utmost care. The walls that support the earthworks are built after the fashion of the Cyclopean walls, the stones being laid as the angles happen to fit, and the irregularity contrasting with the dressed ashlar

work that frames in these mosaic panels produces an effect pleasing to the eye. The stairs, the flights of steps leading down, the shelters over the landing-places, present simple but elegant lines. Art is not quite so irreconcilable to industry as is believed.

In many parts the Belt Line runs along fairly deep cuttings, and thus forms within the city itself a moat that might well stop the foe, did he ever manage to get so far. It is a roughly blocked out third line of defence which it is important to complete, and work upon it is being pushed on vigorously. From the top of the carriage I could see above the cutting of the railway line the wheelbarrows rolling along, the shovels rising and falling, the men in their shirt-sleeves coming and going, and epaulements many feet thick rising steadily. General Todleben's precept, "Make earthworks," is being practised with a zeal that would delight the illustrious defender of Sebastopol.

On the other side, beyond the rampart, showed through the light-flushed haze the mass of the château of Bicêtre and the grim profile of the fort that was engaged just then in firing and crowning itself with long jets of reddish smoke illumined by the sun. Looking towards the city, one could see the skinny poplars that

mark the course of the Bièvre, empty spaces, others enclosed with board fences, pieces of leprous walls, tannery sheds, linen hanging on lines, little gardens with autumn flowers, dahlias and sunflowers, that dotted the landscape with red and yellow spots, market gardens with their stretches of cabbages, their beds of lettuce, their long lines of glass shades sparkling in the sun and the panes of the greenhouses that flashed unexpectedly.

Farther off shimmered the pools of the Glacière, where of yore skaters used to resort, in the days when there was no lake in the Bois de Boulogne. On the horizon swelled the dome of the Val-de-Grâce, somewhat stiff and bossy, like all the buildings in the Louis XIII style, and the bolder and more elegant Pantheon showed its dome supported upon a diadem of pillars. On top of a hillock, or fold of the ground, rather, rose in picturesque fashion the ruin of a broken-winged windmill. Hoguet, the painter of windmills, dressed stones and cut-down trees, would have found in it an excellent subject for a water-colour.

At times the abrupt obscurity of a tunnel, rendered necessary by the passing under a line of railway on a higher level, or by too great a difference in the gradients, put out the landscape, just as if it had been a

stage scene when the gas is turned low for a night effect, and then the view suddenly reappeared in a blaze of dazzling light.

We soon passed Gentilly, and went under the Parc de Montsouris, which, before the limits of the city were pushed back to the line of the fortifications, was right in the suburbs, had not the honour of being a park, and provided Louis Cabat with the subject of one of his prettiest pictures, "The Montsouris Tavern," which was worthy of forming the companion piece to another painting by the same artist, "The Old Beaujon Garden," a reminiscence of a Paris site that has ceased to exist, and which is to be seen in this little picture only How many charming spots have disappeared in just the same way since I was a child!

It does not take the engine more than a few minutes to slide past the Montrouge and Vaugirard stations. The line no longer runs at the bottom of a cutting, for the ground sinks as the Seine is approached and the metals are laid upon embankments that enable one to see a long way. The view includes the forts of Vanves and Issy, the Val Fleury, spanned by the Versailles railway (left bank), on a viaduct with two superimposed rows of arches, through which one can see the

heavens, the trees, and the slopes of the hills; the wood of Lower Meudon showing yellow, gilded by the early autumn breezes, but extremely sweet in tone and seen as through a silvery haze. The whole of the horizon, indeed, was bathed in a white luminousness that blurred the contours, yet there was no mist, rather a sort of luminous dust, and Nature that day seemed to have been painted with Corot's brush.

As if to recall to the feeling of reality the minds which this magnificent spectacle might well induce to reverie, loud reports, that did not come from the forts, were heard close by. The train slowed down as it entered upon the Point-du-Jour Viaduct that connects the two banks of the Seine. From the top of this coign of vantage, a wondrous panorama was unrolled before me. On the one hand, Paris, with its distant domes, towers, and steeples, and in the foreground the waters of the river glazed with shimmering pearly gray. On the other, the softly swelling hills of Meudon, Bellevue, and Sèvres, velvety with bluish verdure, charming resorts, frequented in days that are no more by couples of lovers who inspired Victor Hugo with the lovely line:

"Now when I say Meudon, think of Tivoli," —

and which are now receptacles for the Prussians, who hide under their shade like beasts of prey. It is there that are our foes, invisible in the daytime and prowling forth at night at the time when wild beasts leave their dens. No wisp of smoke, no glint of bayonet, no motion of any sort betrays their presence. The land looks absolutely deserted, and one has to think twice to make sure that Paris is invested. But it is a deceitful calm, for in the shelter of the woods which the autumn sap alone prevented being burned down, they are digging like moles, and repair with blind tenacity the intrenchments which the shells of Mont-Valérien and the guns of the gunboat "Farcy" destroy every morning.

The river was deserted; there was nothing to be seen on it but an ironclad gunboat off the end of the Île Saint-Germain, and the three black lines formed by the booms of the defence. On the right and the left, far down below, for the railway runs upon the topmost story of the viaduct, which is very high, stretched the quays, bristling with obstacles which it is not desirable to describe.

While we were on top of the viaduct, the batteries at Auteuil and the Point-du-Jour threw a number of

shells of heavy calibre, the tremendous report being increased by the echoes of the arches. It was the first time I had heard the ramparts speak out; they talk loud and in a dialogue with the enemy would make themselves heard.

If, contrary to their habit, the Prussians should take it into their heads to return these shots, what a splendid objective — I must be permitted to make use for once of this now fashionable expression, which imparts such an æsthetic look to warfare — the line of carriages, halted on the bridge, and standing out plainly against the sky, would be for them! And what a terrific tumble would our dismembered bodies take from the top of this crest into the depths of the Seine! I have no doubt the same thought occurred to a number of my fellow-travellers, for laughter was hushed, talk ceased and everybody looked grave. It was with secret relief that we all felt the train starting again.

Ronsard's elegy on the destroyed forest recurred to my mind as I beheld the poor Bois de Boulogne, the trees of which, cut down into the shape of whistles a few feet above the ground, form a harrow of sharp stakes on which men and horses alike would come to

grief. A tree cut down is a sadder sight than a ruined house even, for money alone is needed to restore the latter, but to make the other grow again needs the slow collaboration of nature, which never hurries, for it has all eternity to work in, and laughs at ephemeral man's fretfulness. Paris, which hesitates at no sacrifice, has remorselessly cut off her own fair green hair, in order to be the better prepared for the enemy and to give him less hold upon her.

As we passed along the rampart, my gaze plunged into bright villas, cosy retreats of happy life, which have preserved their marble fountains, their flower-beds, their clumps of rare trees, their vases, and their statues. On the side of the Avenue Ulrich, I see the American ambulance installed under tents, this having been ascertained, during the long War of Secession, to be preferable to any other system. Who would have thought, three months ago, that the flag of the International Society would be flying in the Bois de Boulogne sheltering the wounded?

Evening was falling, cold violet tones were spreading over the heavens, objects were becoming blurred and assuming confused shapes, so I had to postpone to another day the completion of my excursion. When

that day did come it proved, unfortunately, one on which the wind was driving great clouds full of rain, and blowing fiercely upon the city, sending tiles and slates flying round like dead leaves; but I am an old campaigner, I have seen many a storm, and I make it a point never to trouble about the thermometer, the eternal preoccupation of the Philistine. So off I went in weather "not fit for a poet."

We first travel back as far as Courcelles, where the line to Auteuil runs into the Belt Line. This part of the road is as interesting as the first, skirting as it does the inside of the rampart which is picturesquely animated. Casemates, armoured guard-houses, shelters formed of posts supporting thick boards, rows of barrels filled with water or sand, hedges of fascines, sandbags set in order upon the parapet for the purpose of protecting the sentries, and defensive works of all kinds are here in infinite numbers. The walls of the gardens and enclosures are crenelated and loopholed; the approaches to the stations bristle with palisades, and barricades, built of paving stones, beams, and trunks of trees, stop the way in every direction, and where the ground between them is open, they are connected by a hollow way.

Whatever the genius of desperate defence can invent is to be found here. I cannot say whether we shall ever get out of Paris, but it is sure that no one will get in. It is a maze of earthworks, epaulements, moats, scarps, and counterscarps, pits, caltrops, chevaux de frise, and other unpleasant surprises. Not an inch of ground could be won without fighting for it. The National Guards, the militiamen, the francs-tireurs, keep watch and ward until the assault takes place; their good temper is unimpaired by the wind, the rain, and the mud, the latter of which clothes them in yellow gaiters. They come, go, and drill; they light, to cook their soup, a fire which the north wind blows up for them; they smoke their pipes; they take a drink of brandy at the canteen, and care not a whit for the drops of water which the storm dashes in their faces.

Beyond the rampart I could see in the country a two-storied tower surmounted with a semaphore, the hill of Sannois, easily known by its ochre-coloured scarp, and the more distant slopes of Montmorency showing blue in the background. Then, turning citywards, a prospect of great courts, of vast enclosures attached to decrepit houses, a patchwork of pieces and bits like Harlequin's coat. These were hybrid warehouses

where comes ashore the wreckage of buildings pulled down, a sort of architectural temple or *Rastro*. There were piles of doors, of jalousies, of awnings, of sashes still provided with panes, of stair frames, of panels torn away in pieces, of shop-fronts, of stalls, of floorings, of boards, of beams, enough to build a fairly large town without the help of carpenters, masons, joiners, and locksmiths. In other yards tipped up carts lifted their shafts to heaven as if begging for work. Clothes were hanging out to dry from every window; in the empty spaces all manner of family businesses were being transacted, and hens were picking up seed as freely as if they were in the country. In this part Paris has preserved its former faubourg and suburban aspect, which the new town will have none of and which nevertheless has picturesque touches.

We were in sight of Montmartre, the dark outline of which stood out grim against the stormy sky. The foreground consisted of the domes of the gasworks reservoirs, the tops of which were sinking lower and lower, and inky black factory chimney stalks. Bluish smoke lay between the foreground and the middle distance, and increased the aerial perspective of the picture. On the slope of the hill, which was of a

lighter tone than the rest, could be made out the battery of guns that is to get the better of all Krupp's cast steel, the two windmills, the only survivors of the winged and gesticulating band that Don Quixote of la Mancha would have charged, the Solferino Tower and its signalling apparatus, and a few houses the severe lines of which did not jar with the general outline. The whole hill was of the tone called neutral tint by water-colour painters, the scale of which goes from blue-black to violet gray.

Banks of clouds, tumbling and falling, resembling the débris of a ruined Cyclopean city, allowed rays of livid light to filter between their disjointed masses, which the storm wind from time to time made brighter. It was grandly beautiful, like the Englishman Martin's biblical pictures of Nineveh or Babylon.

The lower streets are filled with works, factories, and docks, with high brick walls, and pulleys hanging from the attic windows, signs of a great industrial activity interrupted by the war. Such of the streets as open on the rampart have at one end skilfully constructed barricades, impregnable as fortresses. Here is the Ourcq Canal, chock full of crafts of all builds that have sought a refuge within its basins, and the

presence of that flotilla with tarry masts, and painted in bright colours, lends a most pleasant Dutch look to this part of the picture. Then here is Pantin, crowned by a modern Gothic church, with a double spire, that is most charmingly and picturesquely effective; but I have scarcely time to glance at it, for the line sinks between two slopes covered with artificial rock-work and pines placed there by M. Alphand, and soon is swallowed up by an endless tunnel that passes under the park of the Buttes-Chaumont. We emerge from the tunnel for an instant, and then a second, somewhat less long, takes us under Père-Lachaise, under the graves of the dead; the water that drips from the vaulting has filtered through their bones, and the thought fills me with secret horror. On turning around, at the exit of the tunnel, the City of the Dead, with its white dwellings proportioned to the stature of the Manes, is seen on the slope of the hill with a background of sombre verdure.

The pillars of the former Barrière du Trône soon appear, surmounted with their glorious Stylites: Philip Augustus and Saint Louis. Saint-Mandé shows us its pretty bourgeois houses with their little bits of gardens in front; Vincennes its wood, topped by its donjon,

its Mirabeau Tower, and the minarets, ending in crescents, of its Sainte-Chapelle. Bercy station is but seven or eight minutes away, and our trip is finished. The gale has fallen; the rain has ceased; and ragged clouds, which the sunset stripes with rose, are floating in a sky which has just that greenish Egyptian ash or sickly turquoise look that one sees between the white colonnades in Paolo Veronese's banqueting scenes.

VI

AT THE THÉÂTRE-FRANÇAIS

NOVEMBER, 1870.

THE last poster of the Théâtre-Français, a few rain-washed rags of which are still to be seen on the kiosks, bears date September 5. Ponsard's "The Lion in Love" was being given that day. There has been much discussion of the question whether it was not outraging public feeling to reopen the theatres during the period of deep sorrow. Sound arguments were brought forward on both sides, and I have no intention of reviving a debate which is now wholly uncalled for. A few theatres opened their doors for charity purposes and for afternoon performances interspersed with lectures and intermedes, and passages from the works of the masters have been recited by actors in every-day dress. The deep and mysterious strains of the orchestras of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Weber are heard once again. And why should they not be? Music has the gift of soothing pain; it is possessed of inarticulate

consolation, of faint moans, of delicate, feminine caresses that do not offend the broken-hearted, and amid its sighs hope seems to whisper, and at times heroic calls to resound. It is no wonder that the crowd at the Pasdeloup concerts was tremendous, and that there was not a seat to be had at the Théâtre-Français on the occasion of the performance for the benefit of the heroic city of Châteaudun, and, the day after, at that for the benefit of the sufferers by the war.

Yes, it is quite true; the flag of the International Society, with its cross gules on a field argent, does fly from the top of the theatre and from the balcony on which we stepped to get a breath of fresh air between the acts. Wounded men are lying in the foyer which of yore was traversed by critics who at times were so deeply taken up with art discussions that they forgot the play. Strange indeed, at the first glance, is this commingling of the ambulance and the playhouse, but we are living in days when startling contrasts are frequent. Events bring up antitheses of the strangest, and so boldly as to upset all rhetoric. People are already accustomed to this, and it seems the most natural thing in the world.

It was reported that the scenery and costumes having been safely stowed away in a cellar or a protected

warehouse, bomb-proof, the tragedy would be performed in every-day dress between the posts of the stage and without any setting. I rather liked the notion; for tragedy, as understood by the great masters of the seventeenth century, had no pretensions to local colour, knowing neither the thing nor the name for it. Profound Hellenist though Racine was, he certainly did not bethink himself, when about to have "Andromache" or "Iphigenia" performed, of looking at a Greek vase, or of studying a medal of antiquity in order to have the stage-setting more accurate. The analysis of passion, in dialogue, with an undefined architectural background resembling the shadowy tints that fill up the backgrounds of portraits, has no need of accurate costuming, and tragedy, which used to be performed in periwig, kilt, and hooped skirts, might just as well be performed in a frock-coat. Well, I was disappointed. Tragedy had managed to find in some cupboard of the costume room its entire splendid wardrobe: chlamys, peplums, tunics, mantles, cothurns, and even a set of scenery that was rather too Pompeian for the palace of Buthrotes, the scene of the play. But that is not the fault of the siege.

I need not, I fancy, analyse "Andromache," and

add a few æsthetic discussions on Racine. Both the author and his play are well known. But how beautiful and touching was Mlle. Favart in the part of Andromache, which seems to have been written for her! And how admirably the poet has managed, without in the least deforming the pure antique contour of that noble figure, to add to it a delicacy, a chastity, and a nobility of character that heighten its charm!

"In Euripides, Andromache trembles for the life of Molossus, a son she has borne to Pyrrhus, and whom Hermione seeks to have put to death along with his mother, but here there is no question of Molossus. Andromache knows no other husband than Hector, no other son than Astyanax. I believed that in taking this view I was conforming to that we take nowadays of that princess. Most people who have heard of Andromache have heard of her only as the widow of Hector and the mother of Astyanax. It is not thought that she ought to love any other husband or any other son, and I doubt whether her tears would have produced upon the spectators the impression they did, had they been flowing for another son than the one she had borne to Hector."

These lines, so full of finesse and feeling, were written by Racine, and prove that the illustrious poet was also a most tactful critic. The public is a jealous lover that admits of no infidelity in the ideal figures that are presented to it. The widow of Hector sharing the bed of Pyrrhus, as she was bound to do, being his captive, would not have excited its interest.

The auditorium of a theatre always looks strange and gloomy when the sun is shining outside. The daylight finding its way in through some interstice and mingling with the light of gas produces curious effects. Every one knows that the true life of the theatre is nocturnal; the day forgets its hard labours in intellectual pleasure, but it is surprised at being called upon to interrupt its task for a performance that usually occurs at night only.

In times of siege one must be economical if one is to hold out. Man lives not on bread alone, but on light also; gas is stored up sunshine, and under the circumstances in which we find ourselves, its beams have to be carefully doled out. Consequently the hall was half lighted only and the jets were turned half down, forming a penumbra favourable to the stage and

the actors, whose importance was augmented by the semi-darkness in which the spectators were plunged; and, besides, we had come to see and not to be seen. There were comparatively few ladies, and their quiet dresses, black or gray, did not call for bright lighting. Most of the men had not taken the trouble to change their National Guards tunics; hats were scarce and képis numerous. The truth is the place did look a little too much like a camp.

In the large stage-box, which was formerly the Imperial box, sat the convalescent wounded from the ambulance, and all eyes were turned towards them with emotion. There were men with their arms in slings, others with hands or heads bandaged up; but the one who attracted most attention was a young fellow with a broad bandage across his face; he looked like one of the Sahara Touaregs who veil their faces up to the eyes like women. A bullet, which, it was said, it had been impossible hitherto to extract, had lodged in one of the nostrils; but this did not prevent his watching most attentively Andromache's tears and Hermione's fits of anger. Every one of these brave fellows, scarcely risen from their bed of pain, seemed to enjoy the change, and those who still had two hands

applauded at the right places with that simplicity of feeling that is never mistaken.

Between the tragedy and the comedy that day was also performed "A Physician in Spite of Himself." Coquelin read a poem by Henri de Bornier, about Châteaudun, the heroic little town. The poem had a fine lyrical rush about it and was warmly received by an enthusiastically sympathetic audience. He next recited Bergeret's "Cuirassiers of Reichshoffen," — a poem which has swing, boldness, and a certain epic grandeur, and in which the difficulty of clothing modern details in lyrical forms has been most happily overcome. The charge of the cuirassiers in the moonlight, followed by their long shadows galloping behind them, as if the living about to die already had their spectres behind them, recalls, without imitating it, the fantastic effect of Zeidlitz's "Nocturnal Review," which Raffet illustrated so marvellously well.

Sganarelle, improvised into a physician by being thrashed, and played by Got in the funniest possible way, compelled a whole audience to laugh, little as it wanted to, but Molière's fun is irresistible.

On coming out one feels quite surprised to see the light of day and the people going about their business;

unwittingly one staggers for a moment like a night-bird passing from the darkness to daylight.

This performance was followed by another, and it was so successful that the sale of seats had to be stopped; and had not the manager offered me a seat in the lower box called the "Tomb," I should have been compelled to continue to perambulate the arcades of the Palais-Royal. In the box I was much like Don Carlos in the cupboard: —

"I choked right thoroughly, and heard right badly."

I therefore accepted Édouard Thierry's proposal to take a turn round the foyer, that is, round the ambulance, for it is in this splendid, thoroughly aired, high-ceiled hall, which combines every requisite element of healthfulness, that the ambulance has been installed. The monumental chimney-place, in front of which so many discussions have taken place, sends out heat from huge logs and keeps up a pleasant temperature. The beds of the wounded are ranged head to wall on either side of the hall, leaving a broad space between the two rows. The busts of the comic and the tragic poets gaze upon them with their white eyes and seem to watch over them. Houdon's Voltaire still sneers upon

its marble arm-chair; the Patriarch of Ferney has not been veiled; but a band of green percaline protects the pedestal and runs round the walls, breast high, to guard against blows and scratches.

It is needless to say that the beds are scrupulously clean and dazzlingly white. There are others in the long gallery in which people stroll, and the windows of which open out on the Rue Richelieu. On the end bed was placed, no doubt in the room of the dead man who had just been taken away, and as if to sanctify the worldliness of the place, a great black crucifix with its pale yellow, ivory corpse with the arms painfully outspread. When I visited the room there were but two wounded men in bed, the one in the foyer, the other in the gallery, and both smiled in return to my respectful salute. The house surgeons and nurses occupy the small buffet room at the end of the passage. In the linen room, situated on the floor below, I came upon the lovely Delphine Marquet, busy rolling up bandages. With her little ringlets curling on her forehead, her quiet black dress, and her plain linen cuffs and collar, she looked like one of the ladies of the days of Louis XIII., who are to be seen in Abraham Bosse's pictures visiting the sick. But

there was no gallant with soft, long-plumed beaver, puffed out shirt, flaring boot-tops filled with lace, standing near her, hand on hip and twisting his moustache. The actress, serious and engrossed in her charitable work, was toiling in solitude.

We also visited the kitchens, installed on the ground-floor. When the lovely actresses on duty go down into it to fetch a bouillon or to prepare a dainty dish for one of the convalescents, the lighted hall resembles that famous painting by Murillo known as "The Angels' Kitchen."

On our way through the passage that leads from the hall to the stage, we met a couple of Sisters; two Sisters of the order of Hospitallers, and the one was asking the other: "Where is Sister Saint Magdalen?" "At the Palais-Royal Theatre," answered the other in the most natural manner.

At the very moment these Sisters were passing, Basile, wearing the long, black robe, white bands, and queer hat still worn by Spanish priests, was coming out from the green-room. He drew back against the wall and bowed most respectfully. An act of the "Marriage of Figaro" was just then being performed. It was a mere coincidence, of course, but if an author

were to permit himself such a contrast, he would be charged with indulging in unlikelihood. And what a strange series of startling events it is that has led to Beaumarchais' Basile rubbing elbows with real nuns in one of the passages of the Comédie-Française! Béranger's song, "The Actress and the Sister of Mercy," came back to me; but in this case the reality is more striking than the fiction, for it is not in the next world, as in the song, that this meeting has occurred. The relations between the actresses and the nuns are marked by the utmost propriety and decency; the artists of the Comédie-Française are really well-bred women, and they venerate the holy women as these so well deserve to be venerated.

To the selections from "Tartuffe," the "Marriage of Figaro" and "The Litigants," was added the attraction of the recitation of poems. Mme. Victoria Lafontaine recited in an exquisitely charming personal way a delightful little poem by Théodore de Banville, in which is described the evening at home of a National Guardsman who has returned from the ramparts after twenty-four hours spent on patrol and sentry duty in rain and cold wind, and who finds, to his joy, on returning to his house, all the sweet harmonies of the

home: his wife, his child, his comfortable arm-chair, his slippers warmed for him, and the loving talk under the opaline light of the lamp, pure family pleasures to which one is brought back by the seriousness of the situation and which prove far superior to the frivolous enjoyment afforded by the club, the card-room, and the wings of the theatre. Mlle. Agar gave, with incomparable power, Auguste Barbier's "The Brazen Lyre," and Mlle. Favart, dressed in a lovely white gown, satiny and fluffy like the plumage of a dove, cooed in a voice sweeter than the most suave music a poem by Eugène Manuel; a charming piece which bears the title, "The Pigeons of the Republic." The birds dear to Venus are no longer employed in carrying love messages; Cupid no longer hides under their wing the little folded note the seal of which is the lover's kiss. Now they are asked for news of France; they are questioned as to the movements of the armies; they have become official carriers and are enrolled in the great war host.

That very morning I had been reading "The Wasps" of Aristophanes, and it did not seem to me that I was bound to stay to hear the act from "The Litigants" that formed the closing number of the

entertainment. But I did not know how to get out of the place, and I could not possibly have quoted just then the famous line: —

"Brought up within the palace, I know its every turn."

I had quite lost my way; corridors, stairs, and passages had been partitioned off in order to separate the ambulance from the theatre, and I had to ask my way of a Sister who very kindly set me in the right path and accompanied me to the outer door. Is it not a sign of the times, to use the expression employed by some newspapers, to see a critic guided through the mazes of the Théâtre-Français by a Hospitaller nursing Sister for an Ariadne?

VII

THE DESERTED HOUSE

November, 1870.

PECULIARLY sad is the position of the inhabitants of the suburbs whom the war has compelled to take refuge in Paris with bundles hastily packed and so much of their furniture as they could manage to carry away. They have settled as well as they could in the first place they came upon, amid the wreckage of their former comfort, finding it difficult to move about in the mess of things that are all out of place. The chariot that had to flee before the invasion of the barbarians has been discharged precipitately, higgledy-piggledy, without care, and the setting in order of the chaos has been postponed from week to week, for prompt deliverance has been daily looked for. All the tenuous threads with which habit, that second nature, binds a man to a city, to a quarter, to a house, nay, to less, to the corner of a room, to an arm-chair turned in a particular way, all have been suddenly snapped.

THE DESERTED HOUSE

Engrossed at first by the succession of disasters, the anger evoked by defeat, the feverish eagerness of the defence, the breaking of these fibres, the roots of which plunge so deep in the heart, has not been felt at the outset. But day follows day with alternations of hope and despair; life resumes little by little its normal course, and gradually one learns to feel amid the general woe one's own particular sorrow. The soul hurts and no longer fits rightly in the body; something is lacking and one looks for it in uncertainty; undefinable melancholy oppresses, strange discomfort disturbs: it is the old habits returning and whispering in one's ear the well-known words, the familiar expressions of old. They clasp one in their supple arms, and with bent head wet one's shoulder with hot tears; they bring with them Remembrance and Nostalgia, two gloomy figures draped in gray.

It is in the morning that this feeling comes over you, when, on opening your eyes, you see reflected in the spotless mirror on the mantelpiece, not the familiar landscape you perceived from your bed, the clumps of trees uprising from the wildering garden and the row of poplars standing out against the heavens, but the corners of roofs, dormer windows, a forest of chimney-

pots, plaster, earthenware, or sheet-iron, stayed with iron bars, topped with queer hoods and capitals that disgorge smoke into the fog, an ocean of tiles and slates, brown, green, and blackened, streaked by the rain, on which pale Dawn steps with lifted foot like a roofer. Your cat, terrified by the removal, keeps close under some piece of furniture and does not come to wish you good morning as he used to do every day. You stretch out your hand, but you fail to find your Homer or your Shakespeare in its customary place. The white form that, with hair carelessly tied, and resembling in her long robe the angels in missals, used to appear on the threshold of the door and say: "Good-morning, papa," no longer comes beaming in upon you. She is far, far away, thank God! by the lake side, safe from the savage hordes. The postman brings no letters; and all these trifles make your heart bleed internally; the old wounds re-open and a sadness like unto death seizes upon you.

Every one of the refugees, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, experiences this in a greater or less degree, and every one, even if the spot be a dangerous one, and he runs the risk of being shot by a Prussian bullet, goes to see the house, the villa, the hut, the shop or

the lodging he has been compelled to abandon, even if he is going to find the place devastated, torn up by shells, crenelated and loopholed. You feel that you must at any cost see once more the little garden, the well on which the hop-vine and the Virginia creeper used to grow, the cabbage bed, the sunflowers balancing their disks above the rows of vegetables, and all that poor picturesqueness of the suburbs that strikes the humble in heart more, mayhap, than the grander aspects of nature.

Such a desire seized upon me the other day with the irresistible intensity of sickness. I could neither read nor write; my pen stopped in the middle of a line awaiting the guidance of the mind, but my mind was elsewhere. Yet I had sworn I would not go out of the city before we were triumphant and the foe had been driven away. Nevertheless, I had to give in and to own myself perjured. I could not keep away: and so off I went with the companion that habitually accompanies me on my expeditions.

As we passed by the Arc de Triomphe, I noticed that the *bassi-relievi* on both façades had at last been boarded over. At first it had been intended to protect Rude's masterpiece, "The Departure of the Volun-

teers," and Cortot's group, though, as they face Paris, they are less exposed. It is a wise precaution, on the whole, though heroic sculpture would look none the worse for a cicatrice inflicted by a round shot or a shell.

In front of that solemn pylone, on the side which ends the Avenue de la Grande-Armée, there is always a crowd of people, a sort of open-air club, in which the news of the day is discussed, and where information, both erroneous and correct, is passed from mouth to mouth. It is possible to see there how legends are formed, and how the popular imagination adds, with the utmost good faith, to the actual fact just what it needs to become poetical. There, out of diverse accounts, enlarged or combined, is gradually composed the *Romancero* of the rampart. The exploits of the militiamen and the francs-tireurs related by popular rhapsodies, recall the feats of Chingachgook and Hawk-Eye in pursuit of the Mingoes.

Carefully constructed barricades block the road two or three times between the Arc de Triomphe and the barrier, but so far the aspect of the place is not much changed. But once the drawbridge on the rampart and the defences concentrated at that point have been

crossed, you feel as if you had been transported into a strange locality, so completely has the appearance of the place been altered. The military zone of the fortifications, entirely razed and demolished, presents wholly new prospects. On the right, as you go out, on the Chemin de la Révolte, is seen the commemorative chapel erected on the spot where the Duke of Orleans died. No doubt it has been spared on the ground that it is a national monument, and, besides, its shape, low and nearly that of a tomb, did not imperatively call for its destruction. It contained magnificent stained glass windows from cartoons by Ingres; these have had to be stored away for safety. On the other side, Gellé's works, notable for their tall rose-coloured brick chimney shaft and the suave odour of perfumery they spread abroad, have been demolished, and the neighbouring houses have shared the same fate as far as the road to the Porte Maillot.

This pulling down has brought out plainly the façade of the Restaurant Gillet. There are no more wedding breakfasts held there, the banquets are over, and you no longer see, on your way back from the Bois, a couple descend from a carriage and slip quickly up the private rooms stairs to enjoy a quiet dinner.

The kitcheners, that used to be always ablaze, are out now. But in front of the main entrance there is as much bustle as ever, for General Ducrot has established his headquarters at Gillet's, and there is an incessant coming and going of orderlies, horsemen, soldiers, and people coming to ask for passes, for without a pass no one may proceed beyond the Neuilly bridge.

When on my way to my house in the Rue de Longchamps, I often used to go down the Avenue Maillot, which skirts the Bois de Boulogne, from which it is separated by a fairly deep ha-ha fence. In ordinary times it is a very pleasant walk; on the one hand is the Bois and on the other a row of pretty houses with gardens in front. The road is bordered with horse-chestnuts, but of these I shall speak presently.

On turning the corner of the restaurant a prospect wholly new to me suddenly opened up and filled me with the liveliest surprise. A vast range of ground stretched as far as the eye could see, bristling all over with stumps that looked like broken columns. It was quite like an Eastern cemetery, where the place of each tomb is marked by a marble post, and, bar the giant cypresses, it was the exact reproduction of the Field of the Dead at Eyoub and Scutari. Yet we were

at the Porte Maillot and not in Constantinople, but faint wisps of blue smoke and light trailing mists upon the face of the land and blown about by the breeze increased the illusion. The columns were the stumps of the trees of the poor Bois de Boulogne, cut down to three feet from the ground, and not Turkish tombs at all. This wide-spread cutting-down had revealed buildings usually concealed by the trees and which now showed like erratic blocks on the denuded plain. It was painfully desolate, yet with a beauty of its own, and the stern prospect would have delighted a painter.

The axe of the woodman was still at work, and here and there a tree would fall with a dull groan ; nor would I swear that it was always a sacrifice to strategy or that the woodcutter was in every case carrying out the orders of the military engineers. Wizened old women, more hideous than Panzoust's Sibyl, and who looked scarcely able to crawl, kept passing by laden down with huge bundles of wood, the branches covering their backs like a carapace and making them resemble tortoises standing on their hind legs. There was a little girl some thirteen or fourteen years of age trotting along with the stump of a tree, four or five feet long, upon her shoulder. But there are all sorts of faggots,

as Sganarelle remarks, and siege faggots are particularly large.

The mansions, villas, and cottages in the Elizabethan, Renaissance, or Dutch style, that border the Avenue Maillot, and which are nearly all deserted, are used as quarters by the militiamen, as we could tell by the trousers and shirts hanging from the windows. Among all these beautiful houses there was one that I used to like better than any, and in which I loved to imagine scenes of happiness. It seemed to me that one was bound to be happy in that palazzino sheltered by its mantle of English ivy. I used to admire, through an opening in the foliage, its white stone pillars, its well-kept outer steps, the happy mingling of coloured bricks, the balcony overflowing with flowers, the blinds, adorned with painted birds, always discreetly closed. The house was still there, but its expression had changed; it now looked sad and weary.

We were compelled to leave the Avenue Maillot, which was obstructed with barricades that grew more formidable the nearer we drew to the Avenue de Madrid, and we reached the Rue de Longchamps by almost deserted side streets in which militiamen were coming and going, and artillerymen were cooking

their rations upon fires made of brush and bits of wood picked up on the open ground. The barking of a few dogs startled by our passage alone broke the silence. From time to time was heard the sound of a shot fired at a sparrow, and in the distance sounded the rolling of the drums in a drum-school.

At last we came to my house, though I did not know whether I should find even a trace of it. Externally there was nothing changed. The head of the Victory of the Parthenon, the marble original of which was brought from Athens by Laborde, and a plaster cast of which stands in a circular niche, with red background, in my study, was still in its place, the glorious sister of the Venus of Milo, a superb force of form, *vis superba formæ*, an immortal ideal of beauty, the tutelary deity of my home. There was a window standing open, just as if the house still held its former inhabitants, and this struck me as a good omen. I rang the bell, and the gardener opened the gate. We entered, I with swelling heart, into the dwelling that was as small as Socrates', and which I had so easily filled with friends.

When I enter a house that has long stood empty, I have always the feeling that I am disturbing somebody,

and that during my absence invisible guests have settled down in the place and are now retreating before me. I seem to see the flutter of their dresses on the threshold of the doors as I open them. Solitude and loneliness combine to produce a mystery which my entrance breaks in upon. On seeing me, the spirits cease whispering, the spider stops weaving its web, the silence becomes deep, and my steps sound with hollow echo in the empty rooms.

No damage had been done; indeed, no one had entered the place since I had left it; the poet's modest abode had been respected. On the mantelpiece in my room a volume of Alfred de Musset had remained open at the very page I had last been reading; on the wall hung the copy of a head by Ricard, which had been begun by my dear daughter, now, alas! so far away, and who will not read this article. A bottle of scent, uncorked, was evaporating upon her white marble dressing-table, and spreading its faint, sweet perfume in her little maiden's chamber.

I went up to my study, which I had been busy arranging for the purpose of carrying out some considerable work that perchance will never be completed. All that remained to be done was to put up the wall-

hangings, and I thought of the solemn aphorism evolved by Oriental wisdom: "When the house is completed, Death steps in." Yes, death, or else disaster. I was filled with deep melancholy as I gazed upon the place where I have loved and suffered, where I have borne with life as it comes, mingled with weal and woe, with more woe than weal, where I have passed days that shall come back no more, and where visited so many dear ones that have started for that bourne whence no traveller returns. There, in my humble way, I felt something akin to Olympio's sadness.

It was getting late, and the gates of Paris are closed at five o'clock now. But before leaving my beloved home I went for a turn in the garden. The evening mists were beginning to rise and formed a bluish haze at the end of the walks. The wind was rustling the wet leaves, and the bare trees were shivering and trembling as if they felt chilled. A few dahlias were fading in the flower-beds, and an old yellow-legged blackbird, well known to me, shot up abruptly at my feet with a flapping of wings that seemed intended for a salute. A couple of tremendous reports — the "good-night" of Mont Valérien to the Prussian redoubts, — did not

appear to scare the bird, which had doubtless grown used to the row.

That same bird nests every spring in the old ivy that casts its green mantle upon the wall, and whistles mockingly as it flies by my window, just as if it could read what I am writing.

VIII

SHORT SKETCHES

NOVEMBER, 1870.

WHEN painters go out for a stroll they are in the habit of carrying in their pockets a small sketch-book on which they jot down notes. A painter's notes consist of a few rapid strokes of the pencil that reproduce a gesture, an attitude, a look, the main line of a figure or the silhouette of an object. These hieroglyphs are most significant and interesting to those who know how to read them. Although to the eye of the ordinary man they look like confused scribblings, there can always be made out in them the characteristic trait, the touch of nature, the unconscious truthfulness of gesture taken in the very act, and that bit of the unforeseen which is not always attained in artistic combinations. Though the poet, or, if such a title appear too ambitious, the writer, when he is idling along the streets and through squares, does not make sketches on a sketch-book, he has methods of his own by means of which he fixes the con-

tours of things, and which enable him, if he fears that the light pencilling will rub off, to ink it over. He thus carries in his memory, as in a portfolio, a great number of drawings, mostly unfinished, but containing indications sufficient to allow of their being completed at leisure, if the need arise or if caprice urges. They consist of faces noted as they passed, of groups of which a glimpse has been caught, of a striking detail, of a prospect that has opened up suddenly, of a small fact unseen by the crowd, but which strikes the dreamer.

In all this there is no definite subject, no composition making up a picture and lending itself easily to framing, yet among these sketches more than one face successfully hit off, more than one artless expression and more than one lifelike touch of nature, not to be found in works prepared expressly for the public, calls for admiration. It is just the difference between a letter dashed off at one sitting and a letter carefully worked over.

But to what do all these prolegomena tend? Is it my intention to write a companion to Töppfer's treatise on "Drawings washed in with Indian Ink," or am I intending to write on "The Æsthetics of Sketching"?

In no wise; I merely happen to possess a number of short sketches made here and there in the course of my walks, which are not sufficiently important to be published separately, but which, put together pell-mell under the glass of a passe-partout frame made of pine inlaid with maple, the corner of one overlapping the corner of another, may while away a quarter of an hour for any man who happens to look at them during the long siege evenings. It is a frame so filled that, with my reader's permission, I shall now hang upon the nail of the newspaper article.

IN THE TUILERIES GARDENS

This morning a balloon, the "Victor Hugo," was to make its ascent from the garden of the Tuileries, and I was anxious to witness the performance; but the filling of a balloon is but a slow process and the final preparations take up time. While the aeronauts, wearing long boots, and caps on which the word *Aer* is embroidered in gold, were coming and going, looking after every detail, examining the netting, trimming the sand-bags, settling the sacks of despatches, hanging up the cases of pigeons, fastening to the ropes of the car the numbers of the Paris papers intended to give France

news of Paris, my mind, attracted at first by all this interesting bustle, was little by little drawn away from it by the incomparable magnificence of the prospect outspread before me, and in spite of everything, of the Prussians, of the siege, I was experiencing that feeling of intense inward happiness and serene joy which the contemplation of the beautiful assures to every soul, even in the saddest of times.

The heavens were wondrously clear, of a light, transparent blue, interpenetrated with light, and in them floated, like a feather fallen from a dove's wing, a small white cloudlet intended to bring out the tender azure tone by its reflection of the flush of dawn. I have never seen the sky so suave and diaphanous, save from the Acropolis of Athens, behind the Parthenon with its gilded marbles.

Beyond the gates, on the Place de la Concorde, the obelisk of Luxor, soft and tender in tone, the hue of the granite recalling flesh tints, cut, with its sharp line, the gate of the distant Arc de Triomphe; the obelisk completing the pylone. The trees that form the entrance to the Champs-Élysées, stripped of their leaves, resembled, with their delicate rosy-gray branches, the markings of an agate and indicated the boundaries of

the Place by their cross-hatching diapered with spots of light.

On the right, the handsome façade of the Garde-Meuble and the Ministry of Marine, masterpieces of Gabriel, in which the beauty of antiquity mingles so happily with French gracefulness, exhibited their porticoes composed of lissome Corinthian columns, which light shadows caused to stand out, and their crown of balusters, broken by acroters and trophies, over which flew the Red Cross flag.

In the foreground, on either side of the Tuileries gate pranced, on top of their pedestals, the Marly horses, divine thoroughbreds, descending from Pegasus, at least, unless they come from the stables of the Sun, full of fire and spirit, breathing light from their nostrils, and with marble hoofs that have never trod aught but the empyrean. Such steeds can be ridden by allegorical or mythological beings only. A figure of Fame, trumpet in hand, a Mercury known by his caduceus, lightly seated on the flanks of these noble animals like riders in a celestial circus in which the gods are the spectators, seemed to guide them by a mere effort of the will. Most elegant are these two equestrian groups carved in a cloud of white marble and showing

their contours against a china-blue sky. To beauty they add the air of heroic gallantry characteristic of the art of Louis XIV. At this moment they were lighted in the most favourable manner.

The terrace swept down towards the garden in a couple of fine horse-shoe curves ending with the splendid groups of the Saône and the Loire, and thus formed an admirable framework for a prospect that is unrivalled on earth.

Meanwhile the horses of the artillery train, ridden by gunners, were peacefully manœuvring round the great basin, two by two, and getting rid of the stiffness due to the evening air. Soldiers kneeling on the edge of the basin, from which the swans had flown away, were "washing glorious rags." The jet of water, the pressure having been turned down, lipped and lapped with a faint murmur that resembled a plaint. The Hermes, marble sentries that keep eternal watch and ward under the chestnut trees, were gazing with their great staring eyes at the huge pearl-like balloon that was being inflated, and, a little apart from the crowd, Horeau, the author of a great illustrated work on Egypt, struck by the magnificent sight, was making a hasty water-colour sketch of it.

GASTRONOMICAL MELANCHOLY

Who among us has not stopped, on his way through the Palais-Royal, before Chevet's windows? It was a pleasure which the most spiritual-minded could not deny himself, for putting aside all ideas of good cheer, the splendid grouping of provisions could be admired just like a painting by Snyders, Weenincx or de Fyt. Outside hung roebucks, their black muzzles touching the heads of wild boars, stuffed with pistachios, and turning up their lips in grim fashion. On the white marble slabs, the great sea fish, laid on their sides, shimmered with silvery and pearly hues; lobsters marked with brown and yellow waved their formidable claws, and turtles gambolled awkwardly on the edge of the basin fringed with moss, in which, under the light splashing of a thin jet of water, swam Chinese carps. Close by, delicate pullets of le Mans, and turkeys of extraordinary size swelled out their breasts, distended and marbled of a blue tint by the truffles that showed through their thin skins. Grouse, pheasants in golden bronze plumage, Scotch ptarmigans, Russian hazel grouse, partridges with legs prettily gaitered with pink, seemed to be posing

purposely for the pleasure of painters as much as for that of *gourmets*.

I shall not speak of the *pâtés de foie gras*, of the Corsican blackbird pasties, of the brochettes of ortolans, and other "gallantries," as they say in Hamburg, but I cannot help recalling the Thommery grapes, golden as amber, the Montreuil peaches, which were not cheap two-penny half-penny peaches, despised by Alexandre Dumas the younger, but veritable virgin peaches that had lost none of their velvety bloom; the pomegranates, the bursting skin of which allowed a casket of rubies to show; the pears, so perfect that they seemed carved out of Florentine alabaster and intended to be served upon the tables of precious stones of the former Grand Dukes of Tuscany; in a word, the whole of that lovely assemblage of shapes and colours, that savoury Pantagruelian bouquet arranged with such consummate art.

It was raining the other night, and a fancy for shelter had led me under the arcades of the Palais-Royal. Mechanically, and from old habit, I turned to look at Chevet's windows. How greatly was I surprised on beholding, instead of the famous provision-shop, a dazzling tin-smith's shop that flashed with all

the crude brilliancy of a fairy-play stage-setting covered with imitation silver and gold! There was a regular architectural set piece of tin boxes, some round, some square, some oblong, symmetrically arranged like the basaltic columns of Fingal's Cave, their projecting sides gleaming with metallic lustre and exhibiting labels brightened with gilt varnish. I drew near. Alas! it was indeed Chevet's establishment, but comestibles there were no more — not fresh ones, at all events. As a last resort the *landsturm* of the canned goods had been sent to the front: canned milk, canned buffalo humps, canned reindeer tongues, canned tunny, canned Californian salmon, canned green peas, and even canned stewed beef; in fine, all the provisions that men take when bound to the Arctic or the Antarctic poles. The turtles had vanished in the last mock-turtle soups made for such of the English as had remained in Paris, while in the basin where the goldfish used to swim, mooned a little carp that did not look as though it had come from the Rhine.

I gazed at it with the indifference with which we contemplate things beyond our reach, and repeated the clown's philosophical remark, "I will call again next week."

Meanwhile in front of another one of the show-windows had formed a group which judging from the attitudes of its component parts, was filled with deepest admiration. Having approached, I saw at first nothing more than a root of ginseng, the pivots of which were squirming like the legs of Cornelius, the mandragora transformed into a field-marshal in Achille Arnim's tale, and two or three pots of Chinese ginger encased in bamboo wicker-work. But it was not these things that had called out the respectful admiration of the crowd; it was a lump of fresh butter, about half a pound in weight, placed triumphantly upon a plate. Never did the yellow block exhibited in the lottery of the golden nugget light up eyes with such admiration, such desire, such phosphorescence of covetousness. The burning glances gave way at times to softer ones, as the gazers remembered happier days.

The courage, the devotion, the self-sacrifice, the patriotism of Paris have been highly extolled. One word will sum it all up — Paris is doing without butter!

A LITTLE MUSIC

As the rain kept on, I continued my walk. At the entrance to the Galerie d'Orléans, the newspaper vendors, the pack of the press, were giving tongue loudly, and under the glazed roof their clamour was deafening. Buyers crowded around them, forming at this point a sort of black swarming crowd, but as soon as one moved on under the arcading, profound solitude was found. Although it was barely seven o'clock, the shops were closed; a few gas-jets, far apart, were blown about by the wind, and cast wet reflections upon the pools of rain water in the garden. Here and there ghost-like passed some belated pedestrian, hastening to his poor siege dinner: women dressed in black, drawing by the hand a child that followed them *non passibus æquis*, went along as fast as they could, their eyes on the ground, their veils drawn down; but there were very few of them, so that the long gallery seemed to be deserted.

Gusts of rain beat in through the open arcades and made the muddy flagging shimmer and shine. The damp air penetrated my clothing, although I was under shelter, and to the discomfort of the soul was added the dis-

comfort of the body. I kept thinking of the days when this arcaded way, blazing with light, reminded me of the Procuratie at Venice, by the bustle in the shops, the noise in the cafés, and the moving about of the people smoking their cigars. My thoughts were becoming gloomy, when suddenly a sound of music struck on my ear. I drew near; a crowd had collected near the Café de la Rotonde around two little Italian singing-girls.

The one, the elder, a lass of twelve or thirteen, with fair hair, blue eyes, regular, delicate features, and her piece of white linen folded on her head, was very like the Pasqua Maria painted by Bonnat and Jalabert. She wore the same apron, with transversal stripes of different colours, that is as thick as a carpet; the same coarse linen sleeves and skirt with straight folds; only, as the weather was cold, she had thrown over her shoulders a Parisian vestment, the gift, no doubt, of some charitable person, yet she remained pretty in spite of this violation of local colour.

The other, who seemed to be her younger sister, was fair also and was dressed almost in the same way, but her features had a more childish cast. Nor could her musical education have been carried as far as her sister's,

for her part in the concert was confined to marking the rhythm of the song with her tambourine and clashing its metal plates to support the violin part. I will not go the length of saying that the young performer was as clever as the Milanollo or Ferni sisters, but she really played not at all badly upon the poor little red fiddle on which she firmly pressed her small chin. The two sang together a number of those "cantilènes" of the Abruzzi that are full of such penetrating and passionate melancholy, and every stanza of which begins with the name of a flower, — "Fior di castagna, fior di camomilla, fior di rosa." It is impossible to render the charm imparted by the ambient sadness, the rain, the sombre night, and the thoughts of the listeners, more sombre still, to this rustically artless and plaintively sweet music. It came at the right moment to relax the nervous tension and to change sorrow into melancholy.

In order to end their concert with something of immediate interest and in the French taste, the two little girls played the "Marseillaise" with all the *furia* they were capable of. The taller tried to look fierce, and pressed her bow hard upon the strings; the younger pressing the rhythm, shook her tambourine like a bacchante, and Southern impulse carrying away the two tiny

artists, Rouget de Lisle's hymn ended in the *tempo* of a tarantella. Strange and charming was the effect produced by this contrast, which made one think of the bas-relief that represents children endeavouring to lift Hercules' club.

A NIGHT EFFECT

Along the quay there is a silence as of death, a solitude that is terrifying. One might be in a mediæval town at the hour of curfew; scarcely is heard in the distance the rolling of a carriage or the footsteps of a townsman returning home. The houses rise tall and dark, their roofs showing out in the night like black velvet upon black cloth. From the corner of the Quai Voltaire to the Dome of the Institute there are but three windows that are lighted; near the kiosk of the district inspector quivers the light of a belated cab. The street lamps, at half pressure, spot the darkness with scanty red dots, the reflection of which lengthens and melts in the river like a gout of blood. But suddenly a capricious blast of wind parts the clouds, and as many stars light up in the heavens as gas lamps go out on earth. The illumination up there is perfect.

IX

READING ÆSCHYLUS DURING THE SIEGE

IT is eight o'clock in the evening, and my meagre siege dinner has already been eaten and digested. Yet it is too early to go to bed, for the day dawns late in December. Let me make a call on a friend of my own age; the young fellows are on the ramparts or on the Avron plateau. Happy are the young! fatigue does not compel them to remain seated at the Scæan gates, like the old men in Homer, while the Greeks and Trojans are fighting in the plain. Out I go. The night is dark with a sinister darkness rayed by a slanting, wind-driven rain mingled with flakes of snow. The steam fire-engines on the quays disgorge livid smoke into the obscurity. The Seine runs inky, thick, oily, like the waters of the Styx or the Acheron. In quick succession pass by the river steamers, a light in the bows and another at the stern, their cabin windows streaming with light. They stop at the landing-places,

and, in the glare of the lamps and amid a confused swarming of shadows, fantastic and spectral groups become visible. They are wounded men being brought in; at least they will not have to lie on the battle-field until the wan winter morn dawns again, and the cold of night will not bind them with their coagulated blood to the hardened, frozen ground. They are carried to the ambulances, where every care awaits them, in carriages and on stretchers. Their glorious day is over, and if pain does not prevent their sleeping, they will dream of victory and deliverance.

On the darkened façade of the Louvre, on the other side of the river, two windows are blazing so brightly that the red flashes might lead one to suppose the interior on fire. Against the luminous background move to and fro, like shadow pictures that have not been held close enough to the transparent curtain, blurred shadows occupied with some serious job. The fire is being blown with a pair of bellows, and as the blaze brightens or fades, the shadows become stronger or fainter. But behind these panes there is not, as would have been taken for granted in the old days of Romanticism, a Ruggieri preparing poisons, or an alchemist looking in his retorts for the philosopher's

stone. The cause of that suspicious light is merely a forge, used for the repairing of the rifles of the *mobiles* and the National Guards.

I cross the Pont des Saints-Pères, and become the sport of the wind, that tries to carry my hat off into the river, a capital Gavroche trick that just then strikes me as in very bad taste. In the distance I could feel there were, as in Piranesi's shadowy engravings, opaque architectural masses and lines of quays marked by bright dots like those in blackened cardboard held to the light, but the fiery pearls were scattered far apart and no longer formed that brilliant line of light which forms the customary illumination of Paris.

The impression the scene made on me was one of sadness, solemnity, and grandeur. Through the broad arches guarded by the colossal statues of Peace and War, the Place du Carrousel showed shimmering with water, glacéd with reflections and crossed by a single bus, the red lights of which glared like the eyes of some monstrous insect crawling through the darkness.

After traversing a number of streets, that were so dark they looked exactly like saw-cuts in blocks of black marble, I reached my friend's house, and found he had fared forth in search of news, this being the

food still sought for most eagerly, poor as may be one's meals. I had perforce to return home, and once back, my feet in front of a widow's fire, by the light of a single wax candle, for in times of siege one must economise both fire and lights, and in my hand a book taken at random from the deal board on which rest the few volumes saved from my library, I began sadly enough my solitary evening.

The volume happened to be the "Plays of Æschylus," that proud genius who, disdaining his poetic fame, spoke, in the epitaph which he composed for himself, of his fame as a soldier only: "This monument covers Æschylus, son of Nuphorion. Born in Athens, he died in the fertile plains of Gela. The renowned woods of Marathon and the long-haired Medes shall tell of his courage. They beheld it."

The book opened of itself at the tragedy of "Seven against Thebes," as if Æschylus had intended to allude, from the depth of the ages, to the events of to-day.

Aristophanes, the merciless mocker, professed the deepest admiration for Æschylus, an admiration that caused him to be unjust to Euripides, whose merits he unduly depreciated, considering him to have corrupted

taste and manners, which he rendered more effeminate by his too lively painting of passions and his excessive striving after pathos. In the "Frogs" he awards the palm of tragedy to old Æschylus. Euripides asks of his fortunate rival, "How, then, did you create heroes?" — "With a tragedy filled with the spirit of Mars." — "Which one?" — "The 'Seven against Thebes.'" Every spectator went forth from the performance of that play filled with warlike fury.

This tragedy by the soldier who fought at Salamis, Marathon, and Platæa is absolutely unlike the modern idea of such a play. It is rather a dramatised fragment of an epic, something like an oratorio with recitatives and choruses. M. Alexis Pierron, who has translated the work of that great genius, short and grim, points out that the subject has been dramatised several times under different titles, and among others by Racine, under the name "The Hostile Brothers." Only, in Æschylus, the chief character, the one that fills the whole tragedy, and on which the interest is concentrated, is the city of Thebes. Polynices is seen when dead only, and Eteocles does not ever think of himself. He is the pilot at the tiller, as he says himself at the beginning of the play, and he is responsible for the lives of all on

board. Not one of the seven chiefs in the coalition appears, save in the narrative which itself is as good as an action. The preparations for the fight, a funeral dirge over the brothers who have slain each other, these are the elements of the play, but it is filled from end to end with terror and pity, as the old critics were wont to say; with the fate of the city threatened with fire and pillage.

With a few grand strokes, of which Michael Angelo's drawings alone can give any idea, Æschylus has traced a composition that seems the work of a Titan rather than that of a mortal, so far does it surpass the bounds of human genius. Overmastering power is felt in it, and the poet bears his reader upon his mighty hand like one of the statuettes of suppliants carried by the gods.

Strange to say, this sublime tragedy is at the same time a living tragedy, personal and contemporaneous, so to speak. The siege of Thebes brought me back to the siege of Paris, that I should have liked to forget for a time. Humanity is ever the same. The "Seven against Thebes" was first performed under the archonship of Theagenides, in the eighty-seventh Olympiad, that is, four hundred and sixty-eight years before Christ,

and yet the play might have been written yesterday, that is, supposing modern dramatists could ever attain to such beauty and power.

A chorus of women personifies the people of Thebes, Eteocles represents the defenders, and a scout incarnates the besieging army in reports incomparably poetical that sound like clarion blasts, and the words in which seem to shake plumes, to quote Aristophanes' expression.

The play opens with a speech by Eteocles, who realises the full responsibility that rests upon him, and shows himself as great a tactician as he is an excellent politician. He sends to the ramparts the men of mature age, and to the gates those who are in the bloom of their youth and the flower of their courage. "Duty commands; we have to save the city, the altars of our country's gods and their honours that are threatened, our children, this land which is our mother, our tender nurse, who bore the burden of our childhood since the day when, just born, we crawled upon her favouring soil, and who brought us up to be faithful inhabitants and warlike defenders in the day of need. . . . It is reported that last night the Achæans resolved on making a decisive assault, and that the city

has everything to fear. Run, you to the battlements, you to the gates of the ramparts; take up your weapons, put on your armour. Go, and standing firm on the platforms of the towers, on the avenues of the gates, lose none of your boldness, and be not dismayed at the multitude of your assailants. Heaven is on our side. I have despatched scouts and spies towards the army of the foe; I trust they will not have gone in vain, and informed by their reports, I shall be prepared to meet any surprise." Is it not just like reading one of the white Government posters that have been put up during the last few days upon the walls of Paris?

The scout returns and reports that he has seen the seven chiefs plunge their hands into the blood of a slain bull, and swear with horrible imprecations that they will conquer or die. Next they loaded a chariot with souvenirs intended for their relatives in the event of their being slain: locks of hair, buckles, and bracelets. Their eyes were wet with tears, but their resolution was unmoved. Lots had been drawn for the points to be attacked. . . . They seemed lions exciting each other to combat. "Choose your bravest men and post them on the avenues of the city. Hasten,

for the whole mass of the Achæan host is in motion; the dust is rising; white foam drops from the mouths of the coursers and flecks the plain. Be a far-sighted pilot for us. Place the city in safety ere Mars lets the storm loose. Seize quickly the opportune moment for defence. For my part, during the rest of the day, I shall faithfully watch the enemy, and reliable reports shall tell you of their movements in the plain, so that you shall be safe from danger."

On learning the approach of the enemy, the Theban women, less courageous than the women of Paris, utter cries of terror, beat their breasts, tear their hair, rush to the foot of the altars, stretch to heaven suppliant hands, and give themselves up to that excess of grief known to antiquity, in which Æschylus so well sums up the woe of a whole city or a whole people. In that tremendous chorus is uttered the despair of Thebes at bay, when, after a prolonged siege, it is about to be assaulted finally.

Eteocles is annoyed at the uproar; he fears that the cries, prayers, and tears will diminish the soldiers' courage, and he somewhat harshly bids the Theban women be still: "Do not, if you hear it said that men are being wounded and killed, begin to utter

lamentations, for carnage is the very food of the god Mars."

While I was reading the "Seven against Thebes" of old Æschylus, I fancied at times that I heard in the silence of night the dull reports of distant artillery fire. The means of destruction have been greatly improved on since the days of Eteocles and Polynices, when walls were attacked with stones.

Eteocles having gone forth, the chorus, somewhat reassured, depicts in anticipation the fate of a city taken by storm: "Everywhere violence, carnage, and fire; everywhere clouds of smoke, darkening the daylight. Furious Mars breathes destruction; there is nothing sacred to his cruel hands. The city resounds with dreadful howls; a bristling, impenetrable wall surrounds the vanquished; the warrior falls slain by a warrior's steel. The cries of new-born children slaughtered at their mothers' bleeding breasts are heard. Then comes pillage, the companion of murder. The soldiers bump against each other in the streets, bending under their burdens, and those who yet have nothing excite each other. Every man insists on having his share of the booty and none will yield aught. All desire to have the largest share. How can what then

happens be told? Fruits of all kinds strew the ground, a pitiful sight, and the eyes of housekeepers fill with burning tears. Mingled together all the produce of the ground drives along in the mud of the gutters. Young maids, that have never known suffering, will have, unfortunate slaves, to share obediently the bed of a fortunate warrior, of a victorious foeman. For them there is but one hope, death which will swallow them up in its night, death which will put an end to their dreadful woes."

Would not one swear, on reading this description, that Thebes was invested not by the Greeks, but by a Prussian army?

Happily Thebes is saved. Eteocles sets against the seven chiefs who are besieging the city's seven gates, an equal number of brave and skilful chiefs supported no doubt by reliable troops, though they are not mentioned in the tragedy, in accordance with the process of simplification regularly used by Æschylus.

The scout, who is unquestionably the greatest poet in the world, describes to Eteocles in admirable verse the appearance, attitudes and armour of each of the seven chiefs. Let me take at random the portrait of Tydæus; my reader may not be sorry to have the por-

trait of an Achæan chief: "The warrior as he shouts causes the triple aigrette, the mane of his helmet, to shake, and the brazen bells upon his buckler spread terror around. Upon his shield he wears a splendid emblem: the representation of the heavens with their dazzling stars. In the centre shines the full moon, the queen of stars, the eye of night. Thus does Tydæus, proud of his superb armour, standing on the river bank, loudly call for battle, like a spirited steed, irritated by the bit and impatient to spring forward at the sound of the trump."

As each portrait is traced, Eteocles chooses the hero he intends to oppose to the original. All these chiefs of the foe have coats of arms like mediæval knights. Capanæus has for an emblem a naked man, a torch in his hand, and the figure exclaims, in letters of gold, "I shall burn the city." Eteocles bears on his shield a soldier running up the rungs of a ladder and shouting the words inscribed: "Mars himself cannot cast me down from the ramparts." A typhon vomiting flames is engraved upon the shield, large as a wheel, of the giant Hippomedon, and handsome Parthenope has a sphinx for an emblem. The wise Amphiaraus has disdained any symbol. As for Polynices, two figures

appear on his buckler: a warrior in golden armour, and a woman advancing with majestic steps and leading the warrior by the hand; "I am Justice," says the inscription; "I shall bring this man back and restore to him the inheritance of his fathers." A lying prophecy, for Polynices owed his sepulture only to the piety of his sister Antigone.

It was growing late; no other sound was heard than that of the rain drops; the blast drove against the windows of my attic. My candle had burned down to the glass top of the candlestick and was about to make it crack. I closed the book after reading the following words of good omen, the concluding words of the "Seven against Thebes:" "Next to the mighty Jupiter, next to the immortals, he it is who has saved the race of Cadmus, he it is who repulsed the tide of strangers that prepared to swallow it up."

X

MORE SKETCHES

DECEMBER, 1870.

I

THE SNOW MUSEUM

ONE of my painter friends called for me last night to take me to Bastion No. 85, where, he averred, I would see something interesting: only we must hurry, for in these gloomy December days night comes on early, and, besides, a change of temperature might destroy the object of our pilgrimage. So we went off in hot haste, cursing the slow pace of our unfortunate cab horse that went slipping and sliding about on the hardened snow, which became all the slipperier the farther we ventured into the deserted streets of the quarters that stretch beyond the Luxembourg and the Observatoire. There were but few passers-by, but on every square, at every meeting of four streets, on every empty space suited to manœuvring, were to be seen National Guards going through their drill in spite

of the very sharp cold, which, however, they did not seem to mind.

We were driving along tall gray walls placarded with old posters, queer old houses devoted to businesses that the city relegates to its extremities, board erections, ambulances or shelters for the troops, dismantled fences the tone of which recalled drawings on tinted paper, touched up with white, the layers of snow clinging here and there taking the place of the dabs of body colour. If the rising mist had not limited the prospect in the foreground, we could have seen over the low walls, in the frames of the open doors, through the openings in the hovels, wonderful bits of winter landscape in the direction of the cultivated grounds and swamps which the Bièvre overflows and over which rises the Butte-aux-Cailles, but this was not the object of our excursion and I therefore did not feel the disappointment very keenly.

On reaching the chemin de ronde of the rampart, we left our vehicle, the horse of which had fallen, and my friend led me to the spot where was to be seen the curiosity he had promised me and which proved well worth the trip to the bastion.

The seventh company of the 19th battalion of the

National Guard contains a number of painters and sculptors who very soon tired of the excitement of the everlasting game of chuck-farthing, and were only too glad to fill up their leisure time in some other way. Pipes, cigars, and cigarettes help to while away the time, and discussions on art and politics occasionally kill it, but no man can go on indefinitely smoking, talking, or sleeping. Now, during the past three or four days, snow has fallen quite abundantly; in the interior of the city it was already half melted, but on the rampart, more exposed to the cold wind blowing in from the country, it had remained. And as there is always in an artist, no matter what his age may be, a remnant of boyishness and mischievousness, at the sight of the lovely white carpet, the idea of a snowball fight immediately suggested itself as a seasonable diversion. Two sides were formed, and willing hands converted into projectiles the brilliant frozen crystals collected on the slopes. The battle was just about to begin, when some one cried out: "Would it not be better to make a statue with these snowballs?" The notion took at once, for Falguière, Moulin, and Chapu were on duty that day. A rough matrix was formed with stones picked up here and there, and the artists, whom

Chapu kindly served as assistant, set to work, making use of the quantities of balled snow handed them by their comrades.

Falguière made a statue of Resistance, and Moulin a colossal bust of the Republic. Two or three hours were sufficient to enable them to carry out their inspiration, which proved most happy. Nor is this the first time that great artists have condescended to carve the Carrara marble that falls to earth from heaven in the form of glittering powder. To please Pietro de' Medici, Michael Angelo modelled a colossal statue in snow — a rare thing in Florence — in the very court-yard of the palace, and this piece of playfulness in which shone the artist's genius — for the material matters little, provided the thought be there — won him the good graces of the new Grand Duke, who protected him as Lorenzo the Magnificent had done.

Falguière's statue is placed at the bottom of an epaulement, not far from the guard-house, on the edge of the chemin de ronde, and it looks out towards the country. The refined artist to whom we owe the "Victor of the Main," "The Little Martyr," and "Ophelia," has not given to his "Resistance" the robust, almost virile form and the Michaelangelesque

muscles the subject seems to call for. He understood that it was moral rather than physical Resistance which ought to be shown, and instead of incarnating it under the features of a sort of female Hercules ready for the fray, he has given it the somewhat delicate grace of a modern Parisian woman. Resistance, seated or leaning, rather, upon a rock, has crossed her arms on her breast with an air of inflexible resolve. Her dainty feet, the toes of which are clutching the stone, seem to be trying to grasp the ground. She has thrown back her hair with a proud gesture of the head, as if to show the foe her lovely face, more terrible than that of Medusa. On her lips plays the faint smile of heroic disdain, and in the bent brows is concentrated the obstinacy of a defence that will never yield. No, indeed; never shall the barbarian's huge fists bind these delicate and slender arms behind that back with its elegant lines; that lithe waist shall break rather than bend; immaterial force shall overcome brutal strength, and like Raphael's angel, shall set its foot upon the monstrous quarters of the beast.

Below this improvised statue, Falguière was modest enough to inscribe in black lettering upon a bit of board — "Resistance." There was no need of the

inscription, for no matter who may look upon the figure, so obstinately energetic, will at once put the name to it, even did it not have by its side a cannon made of snow.

It is regrettable to reflect that the first warm breeze will cause this masterpiece to melt and vanish; but the artist has promised that when he is relieved he will make a reduced replica in clay or wax in order to preserve the expression and the movement.

On the highest point of the epaulement stands the bust of the Republic, by Moulin, its glance seeming to look far over the bastion over the surrounding country. But that is not the place to look at it from; the proper place is from the chemin de ronde, at the foot of the slope. While the artist was working at the "Republic," the lines of which are to be lengthened and combined in order to be seen from far below, his friends shouted to him: "Put on more brow; stiffen the cheek; bring the chin out; put more snow on the cap." And the artist, perched on the epaulement like a Greek workman at the top of a pediment, listened to the suggestions and the criticisms, and the bust assumed a majestic and dread beauty.

What admirable material is that celestial Parian marble called snow! What immaculate whiteness it

has! what a fine grain, what a sparkling like mica and silver dust! How softly do the colourless figures modelled out of that silky down stand out against the cottony background of mist and distant trees that, as they tip the lower gray sky, seem to be light reddish mists!

II

ART DURING THE SIEGE

Once art has seized upon a man's soul, it haunts him all the time, possesses him, to use the word in its liturgical sense, and no exorcism can drive it out of him. Besides, the soul loves the dæmon, though it torments her and makes her suffer, and would deeply regret being freed from it for ever. Nothing can draw the poet from his ode, the sculptor from his statue, the painter from his canvas. In the midst of the greatest catastrophes they are full of a rime, a form, a colour. It does not prevent their devoting themselves to their country, sacrificing their lives coolly, and shooting as straight as a franc-tireur. But through the event they always behold nature; they draw beauty from horror's self and seek to transpose facts into the sphere of art.

Note that robust, well-set-up young fellow who has perhaps enlisted in a marching regiment; he is doing his sentry-go on the rampart, and through the embrasures formed by the sandbags he casts from time to time over the suspicious horizon the painter's all-discerning glance. The countryside is quiet and he falls back into his reverie. An image presents itself to his mind, and he extends and transforms it into a symbol. A woman dressed in black passed by, a balloon flew through the air, a fort was shelling the Prussians, and out of these facts that are wholly unconnected, and that remain meaningless to the inattentive pedestrian, he brings forth a lovely composition, full of feeling and tender poesy.

Puvis de Chavannes has brought back from the ramparts a superb drawing which he has had lithographed, and which recalls the grand and simple manner of the artist to whom we owe the magnificent frescoes on canvas called "War," "Peace," "Labour," and "Rest." A slender, lissome woman in long mourning garments, her hair cut like a widow's, her right hand resting on a chassepot with the bayonet fixed, and the left outstretched to heaven, her face in quarter profile, is standing on the earthwork of a bastion. The folds of her

garment, that break round her feet like the stiff breaks of the folds of Gothic draperies, form a pedestal for her and add to her elegance. Somewhat beneath her are seen cannons, gabions, piles of cannon-balls ; from a fort the profile of which is recognised as that of Mont-Valérien escape horizontal masses of smoke, and in one corner of the heavens, already blurred by the distance is seen the faint shape of a balloon, the only means of communicating with the outer world that is left to us.

The symbolical figure, which might be real and be a portrait just as well as a piece of generalisation, follows the balloon with a look full of anxiety and love, for the frail airship is freighted with great hopes.

At the bottom of the drawing are the words: "The City of Paris, invested, entrusts to the air its appeal to France!"

So touching a figure calls for a companion: "Paris pressing to its heart the messenger dove, the bearer of glad tidings." And in order to give it the right expression, all Puvis de Chavannes has to do is to think of Mlle. Favart reciting "The Pigeons of the Republic," in a gown that shimmers like the plumage of the bird itself. He can while his time at that when his next turn of duty comes round, and he sees flying

across the heavens our winged letter-carriers that are pursued but not overtaken by Bismarck's hawks.

III

IN THE NIGHT

As I was returning with my friend, who also turned to account his leisure hours on the ramparts, and etches with striking originality the extraordinary aspects of war's horrors seen through the refinements of civilisation, he showed me a few notes jotted down among sketches in his note-book: "The guard awakened suddenly. The call to quarters. Running to the bastion. The Prussians attempt a surprise that is at once foiled. Lowering, rainy sky illumined with intermittent flashes when the forts of Ivry and Bicêtre, the lights of which are visible, begin firing, while reddish reflections only are seen in the direction of the other battery. On the dark background, as on burning paper over which the sparks travel, the rattle of musketry multiplying its numerous, luminous dots and forming capricious lines. A haze like an aurora borealis quivers on the horizon; it is Gachan burning; and at times the fort of Bicêtre casts a long beam of electric light like the forked tongue of a serpent. That beam, of a

white, dead tint, resembles a moonbeam or an immense band of paper suddenly unrolled upon the landscape, which forthwith loses its colouring and assumes tones of Spanish white. The beam is seen edgewise, which adds to the strangeness of the effect. Soon everything sinks back into darkness and silence."

IV

MOONLIGHT ON THE BASTION

YESTERDAY there was the loveliest moonlight in the world, a moonlit night such as one seldom sees in our Northern lands. It was not day, yet it was not night. Moonlight, whether it be brilliant or not, has the property of decomposing colours and casting over all objects a uniform hue midway between grayish blue and hydrangea. It brings out the modelling only by the contrast of black and white, and over all it casts its dust as brilliant as mica.

But this time the boarding of the huts and canteens preserved perfectly its pale salmon tint; the ochre of the slopes did not turn to chalk; what was red remained red; the colour of the uniforms of the sentries pacing along the banquette with shouldered arms was easily recognisable; in the background, against a steel blue

sky, the silhouette of Paris exhibited the domes of the Pantheon and the Val-de-Grâce in shadowy tones of intense violet, while beyond the rampart, the land dusted with snow produced the effect of a vast silver relief, or rather of a portion of the moon seen through a telescope.

XI

THE ANIMALS DURING THE SIEGE

FEBRUARY, 1871.

A QUESTION which a dreamer may well ask himself is whether animals observe events which occur around them and yet appear to be outside the range of their instinct. Of course Descartes' partisans would at once reply in the negative, for to them animals are mere machines, a kind of spit performing its appointed work in unconscious fashion; but those who have lived familiarly with animals, man's lower friends and humble brethren, who have watched and observed them attentively, hold a different opinion. Democritus understood the language of birds, and Dupont de Nemours has composed the dictionary of it. Without going so far, it is not impossible for an observer to form an idea of the impressions and judgments of animals.

It is not probable, for instance, that the dogs were

aware of our being invested by the Prussians. They are not acquainted with King William, M. de Bismarck, or Moltke, but they quite understood, and at the very beginning, the abnormal situation of the city. The unaccustomed bustle of the population, the almost universal change from civil dress to military uniforms, the drilling of the Mobiles and the National Guards on the squares, the bugle-calls and drum-beats startled them, astonished them, and gave them food for reflection. Some of them, who had come in for refuge with their owners, were plainly bewildered by the novelty of the place; they hesitated about the street they ought to follow, their gait uncertain, smelling the road and consulting at the corners some fellow-canine inhabiting the quarter. The suburban dogs looked quite unlike the city dogs, and could easily be distinguished by their rustic and country look. As soon as they heard the rumbling of a carriage, they hastened to get out of the way, plainly frightened, while the Parisian dogs scarcely condescended to move a little bit out of the road just as they were about to be run over, like dogs who have the right to the crown of the causeway. The others had all the timidity of the country-dweller.

There was held every morning in front of my door a meeting presided over by a well-set-up brindled bull-terrier, his legs slightly bowed, his lower lip projecting, his upper one turned back; he wore a black leather collar studded with brass scales. The other dogs, of less breeding, that surrounded him, appeared to think highly of him and to listen deferentially to his remarks.

To listen? Did the dog speak? Certainly he did; not, it is true, after the manner of men with articulate speech; to quote the fine expression Homer employs to distinguish our own sort of animals, but in short barks, in varied growls, in play of the lips, in wagging of the tail, and in expressive play of his features. It is certain that the group of quadrupedal conversationalists was discussing the situation. From time to time a new-comer appeared to bring a piece of news, which was talked over, and then the company broke up, each member of it going off to attend to his own affairs.

This was at the beginning of the siege, at the time when food had not yet become scarce. The stock of beef was still large, and the high price of fodder caused horseflesh to be abundant, the public, at that time, not having taken kindly to hippophagy. At first animals did not suffer; the menu of their meals remained about

the same, but matters soon changed: the resistance was prolonged, and the rations of the lower animals were diminished like those of human beings. The poor creatures could not make it out, and looked at their masters with questioning eyes when their meagre pittance was handed them. They seemed to inquire what they had been guilty of, and why they were being punished for faults they had not committed. Numbers of dogs were deserted or purposely lost by their masters, who had not the courage to kill them, for "the best thing about a man is his dog," as Charlet's trooper says, and matters must go very hard with a man before he can bring himself to part with his four-footed friend. More than one poor devil shared his last crust with his dog, and in one club there was a general revolt of the tender-hearted when it was moved that all these "useless mouths" should be pitilessly sacrificed. A few kindly souls also put in a word in favour of the cats, which have their good side also, in spite of the slanders circulated about them by evil-minded people.

I often met, on my way home at night, vagabond dogs wandering like shadows along the sombre walls, mooning along as dogs do that are bound nowhere in particular. When I happened to pass under the flicker-

ing light of an oil lamp, and they saw that I looked fairly good-natured, they would follow me at a respectful distance, just out of reach of a kick or a cut with a stick, if perchance the pedestrian should prove to be a mortal of unkindly disposition; though dogs are rarely mistaken in this respect, being naturally better physiognomists than Lavater himself.

It is very touching to see one of these poor, lost creatures, tired out by vain hunting about in the mazes of a strange city, trying to attach itself to a master and to get a new boss for itself. It will accompany you on a long walk, yapping by your side in a plaintive tone, looking at you affectionately and occasionally putting its wet nose into the palm of your hand. It is caressing obsequiousness, not importunate, and marks a good dog separated from its master by some sad fate, in spite of its devotedness, and one who will serve you faithfully if you choose to accept it. Some used to come to my very door with me, and I own it wrung my heart to be compelled to shut it in their faces and to flout their hopes. I am of the same way of thinking as Crébillon, the tragic writer, who used to pick up lost dogs, put them under his cloak, take them to his home, where he gave them shelter, tried to teach

them a trade, such as turning the spit, dancing, jumping for the King or the Queen, giving a paw, and other canine performances, and then, if they proved stupid, rebellious, or lazy, would take them back with a sigh to the place where he had found them. But I had already my own private menagerie and experienced much difficulty in feeding it.

Soon the animals noticed that men looked at them in a strange fashion, and that under pretext of caressing them, they felt them with their hands, with a butcher's touch, to make sure of their more or less good condition. They had turned into a prey for man, into game that was hotly tracked. The cats, cleverer and more distrustful than dogs, were the first to understand this, and exhibited great prudence in their dealings with humanity. It was only with tried friends of the feline race that they ventured to purr and to take their usual place upon their knee, but at the least abrupt gesture, they bolted to roofs and inaccessible cellars. The dogs, having at last seen the change, fled like hares when they were called, though nooses, bags, and clubs managed none the less to secure many a victim. Shops for the sale of dog and cat flesh, as well as of rats, boldly set up their signs, making no attempt to deceive

their customers with regard to the kind of meat they dealt in. They were crowded with purchasers.

The morning reunion in front of my door diminished in numbers day by day, and soon the only one left was the bull terrier, wondering, as he lay on the threshold of his master's shop, at the mysterious disappearance of his friends. For the matter of that, he also was on the look-out, scented danger afar and showed his teeth at the approach of any suspicious person. When he saw some evil-looking prowler go by with a bag, he would take refuge under the counter with low growls.

At the beginning of the siege the posts on the ramparts had a large attendance of dogs that had taken up their permanent quarters there. They welcomed the guard coming off with wagging tails, and the guard marching on with joyous barks. They shared the soldiers' rations, but they took only the meat offered them and disdained bread with proud nostrils. Hunger speedily made them less particular; only, after a time, they were promoted to be themselves eaten, helping out the short commons or being sold to third-rate restaurant-keepers, and the posts little by little lost their guests.

A single dog remained faithful to the sector. He could be seen travelling along the rampart, as if he were going the rounds, his flanks sunken, his bones sticking out, the vertebræ of his back resembling a chaplet, the spinal nodus prominent, the processes of the joints almost piercing the skin, his ribs like barrel hoops, and his coat harsh and coarse like dry grass. Thus he roamed around, more misanthropical than Timon of Athens, avoiding men, and especially soldiers, with as much care as he formerly sought them out; a poor simple-hearted quadruped, he considered that the conduct of the *bimanas*, genus *primates*, whom he had too long thought well of, was lacking in decent regard to his species, and he bore him a grudge in consequence. He was the ghost of a dog revisiting the pale glimpses of the moon; two profiles gummed one upon the other; a piece of cutting-out with no thickness whatever. The poor animal had chosen for his solitary walks the spot where had been modelled in snow the statue of Resistance, by Falguière, and the colossal bust of the Republic by Moulin. An artist who was often on guard on that bastion, noticed the unhappy creature, and becoming interested in him attempted to ingratiate himself with him by making all sorts of ad-

vances to him. He called him in a caressing voice, and sitting down on a stone in order not to frighten him away by appearing to track him down if he were to walk towards him, he exhibited from afar an appetising piece of bread. Drawn by the bait, the animal stopped but made no attempt to come near, in spite of the hunger that gnawed at his vitals. Then my friend placed the bread on a stone and discreetly withdrew. Then the dog overpassed the dividing space with a prodigious leap, seized the bread, and vanished afar with the speed of a greyhound in order to devour his prey in a safe place.

After the dogs and the cats the birds' turn came. The ornithology of Paris is not very varied; it comprises little else than sparrows, and, in the old gardens of the quieter districts, a few thrushes, and nightingales. The sparrows, winged street Arabs, regular gutter Gavroches, are beloved of the Parisians and enjoy in the city an immunity comparable to the privileges of the pigeons of Saint Mark's. Seed is not scattered for them at regular hours, it is true, nor do they have an income of their own, like the Venetian birds, but they are allowed to pick shamelessly everywhere, and the bird-charmers in the gardens of the

Tuileries throw bread crumbs to them; they go and come, chatter and flutter about, move only when you are on the point of stepping on them, and their twittering fills the atmosphere with gaiety. Until now their innocent lives have been respected of all men, nor, indeed, are they very fat under their feathery covering, these careless little Bohemians burned up with ardour and cleverness. But hunger made them as valuable as larks or ortolans.

People had begun to hunt them, and for a time, accustomed as the birds were to the sound of musketry and heavy guns, they could not bring themselves to believe that this new fusilade was directed against them, believing themselves unworthy of so great an expenditure of powder and shot. They were shot at with pea-shooters, limed twigs and snares were set for them, and they perforce had to believe their own eyes and recognise the fact that the old pact of friendship was broken and that in Paris they were reckoned as game. Excessive mistrust took the place of perfect faith. A creature, once it has been deceived, long remembers it, and the once tame sparrow became wild and shy. Any man, even if inoffensive, henceforth was looked upon as a hunter, and the little clients who,

in snowy weather, used to come fearlessly to my window to eat a few crumbs of my meagre pittance, came no more, although I have a brahminical respect for animal life. Hunted down, shot, and decimated, the whole army of them determined to emigrate, and painful as it is to leave the old ivy-covered wall where the nests are built in springtime, the cornice of the palace where one has been wont to preen one's feathers, the dormer window that frames in the young work-girl bending over her task, they set off to seek safety afar.

There is not a single sparrow to be seen in Paris to-day, yet I hope all have not been killed. A few strokes of the wing, and they are away beyond reach of shot, for the bird is not handicapped by our fatal heaviness, and can always flee from earth into the heavens. Blessed privilege!

XII

THE ANIMALS IN THE ZOÖLOGICAL GARDENS

FEBRUARY, 1871.

WHILE I was interested in the sufferings of domesticated animals during the siege, I was no less most solicitous of the condition of the wild beasts kept captive in the Zoölogical Gardens. It is bad enough to be taken away from one's natural surroundings and imprisoned within a narrow cage, without having, in addition, to suffer the pangs of hunger. These poor brutes, guiltless of man's barbarous folly, suffer the reaction from it with touching resignation. They are filled with amazement, and gaze upon you with eyes enlarged by thinness and brimful of questionings, seeming to say: "Since you can no longer feed us, at least restore us to liberty." I therefore resolved to pay a call upon the former inhabitants of the desert.

Everywhere in the city, driven by hunger to caprices

and depravation of taste, the most extraordinary dishes were talked about: tiger cutlets, bears' hams, buffalo humps, elephants' feet with melted butter sauce, filets of llama, camels' ribs, saddle of kangaroo, jugged monkey, boa constrictor with Tartare sauce, pickled crocodile, fricassee of pheasant, Numidian cranes with chasseur sauce, truffled ostrich livers, chaud-froids of toucan and horned screamer, and other zoölogical combinations which caused me to be alarmed concerning the inhabitants of the Zoölogical Gardens, although it did strike me as strange that a national establishment should dispose of its collections in such a way. The exotic additions to the siege bill of fare were drawn from the Jardin d'Acclimatation, the two young elephants there having been sold at a very high figure, as were also several other animals that had formerly attracted public curiosity, and this it was that accounted for the culinary eccentricities reported in the press.

I first tried to enter by the main gate at the end of the bridge, but it was closed on account of the ambulance huts that have been erected in this part of the grounds. Through the windows I could see rows of beds and the sick lying in them at full length or sitting up and reading a paper, according to the nature of

their wounds. This retreat of science and reflection, where, when I was quite a young chap, I used to come to scan my first verses, — a long time ago now, — presented a strange appearance, transformed as it was into a refuge for the victims of war.

A side door that stood open some distance away, enabled me to enter the grounds, the first animal that welcomed me with a glance, its nose flattened against the wire of its paddock, being a small Shetland pony, shaggy and rough in its winter coat. It was so small that the horse butcher could not have got more than a few pounds' weight of meat out of it. I soon reached the dens of the wild animals that men, who ought rather to retain the term for themselves, call ferocious. Some of the dens had been protected in anticipation of the bombardment, which had not yet begun. The protection consisted of a mass of paving stones and earth on which grass was already forming verdant mosaics. This, however, was intended merely as a place of refuge; the other dens, with the shutters raised, allowed their wonted prisoners to be seen behind the bars. The bears were swaying in a way they have, that makes them look like *aïssaouas* working themselves up for their performances, or were trotting around,

rubbing their noses against the bars as though they expected to find a flaw in them. Their thick fur prevented my ascertaining how far they had lost condition in consequence of the fasting enforced on them by the siege. Besides, they, no doubt, like all animals that in the wild state go to sleep during the winter, added to their diminished rations the extra fat on their bodies intended to nourish them during their period of torpor.

The lions preserved their majestic attitude. They accept captivity with disdainful resignation; so soon as they have assured themselves that escape is out of the question, they cease to struggle and do not allow their gaolers to watch useless attempts at freedom. They are animals of noble race that, like aristocrats, despise the mean human beings who have treacherously trapped them in an infamous snare. As I gazed upon them, Victor Hugo's lines came back to me: —

"The lions in the den had tasted no food: Captive, they roared to mighty Nature that cares for brutes within their darksome dens. For three long days had the lions eaten naught."

I do not believe the lions in the Zoölogical Gardens had been fasting as long as those in the den

wherein Daniel was cast by order of King Nabuchodnosor, but all the same they could not have had a very plentiful dinner: it probably consisted of refuse portions of horses that had died of sickness and been condemned as unfit for human consumption, a poor feed for those tremendous eaters that consume annually in Algeria, as is shown by statistics, twelve thousand francs' worth of oxen, sheep, and goats, apart from gazelles and wild boars, and whose princely appetites will have none other prey than a living one. They must have felt disgusted with these fetid remains, fit only for hyenas and vultures. One of them was pacing up and down in an aimless sort of way, lashing his sides with his tail; the other was lying down in a corner of the den, one fore paw outstretched, the other half-bent back under his chest, his head looking like a human face, with its straight nose, its broad brow, its stiff mustaches like silver threads, and its wild tawny mane. Melancholy was the look in his yellow eyes that gazed into space; perhaps in his hungry reverie he was thinking of the antelopes that repair to the watering place in the evening to slake their thirst. As he lay there, he seemed to be waiting for Delacroix to paint him or Barye to carve him. Still more touch-

ing was the sight of a poor sick lioness, so thin that she was almost diaphanous, and apparently in the last stages of consumption. Worn to a shadow, hollow-flanked like a greyhound, she had become ideally elegant and resembled the lions rampant on old coats of arms, which were half ornaments, half monsters, with sharply defined, cursive touches, that heraldic art cut out upon the fields of metals or tinctures, "armed and langued gules." Her pale yellow coat caught the light and made her stand out from the penumbra in which the back of the den was plunged; she was set on her four legs, the muscles of which, once vigorous, formed furrows in her skin. In her yearning, shivering attitude could be read the nostalgia of the desert and the burning rocks of the Atlas Mountains, while the disease imparted to her glance a sort of unwonted gentleness and a despairing expression. Deprived of her strength, the lioness appeared to be imploring human pity. More than once have I noted that look in dying animals; it is intensely tragical, and no one can see it without emotion. I learned lately, by an official report published in the press, that the poor lioness has died.

A jaguar has also died, but it has not been sold for

butcher's meat. The Zoölogical Gardens are fond of their animals, care for them tenderly, and do not barter them away.

The two tigers did not appear to have suffered much, for under their splendid tawny coats, rayed with stripes of black velvet, their poor condition was not easily marked; one of them was licking its paws and passing them over its face to wash it, with a cat-like gesture that is said to foretell rain. The second had dashed abruptly against the bars with a low roar, and remained standing there, exhibiting its cavernous mouth bristling with fangs and the silky hairs on its stomach. It may be that it had noted among the spectators a desirable prey from which it was parted by the bars of the den — perhaps a baby in its nurse's arms. Its pose was superb, for nature models and paints these mighty felines to perfection, and lavishes beauty upon these formidable animals.

I was bound to pay a visit to the pit of Martin, the bear. Martin, just then, was not climbing up the dead tree planted in the middle of his den, as he used to do in order to get hold of the rye roll tied to a string and pulled up little by little, a performance that delighted invalids, soldiers and their sweethearts, and even idling

philosophers. There was nobody now to watch his pretty ways; no climbing bears, no Bruin rising up on its hind legs, and learned in the accomplishments of which Atta-Troll, the hero of Heinrich Heine's poem, was so proud. Only a young cub busy, for lack of sight-seers, in looking at itself, a shaggy Narcissus, with amorous complacency, in a pool of water formed by the overflow from the trough. It was gazing at itself in that mirror, bending its head, making faces to itself, plunged in ecstacy and apparently delighted with its own charms. The reflection of its own image had at first surprised it, then it had come to the conclusion that it was handsome, and smiled away at itself in the most comical fashion. Hyenas also are conceited, and the Arabs say that to catch them one need only hold out a mirror to them and promise them kohl to line their eyelids with. But indeed the young bear cub, with its tawny fur on which shimmered redder gleams, its bright oblique eyes, its black, grained nose, like a truffle, was, in its way, handsome and elegant. It would have looked well on a settee in a boyar's ante-chamber, and would have proffered quite gracefully the glass of spirits offered by way of welcome to visitors. And tender Mummia, faithless to her duty as a well-

behaved female, might perhaps have given it a rendezvous in her Pyrenean cavern.

Some distance off, a camel had passed over the palisade of its plot of grass, its benignant and hideous face at the end of its long neck recalling the evocation scene in Cazotte's "The Devil in Love," in which the fantastic camel says in a hollow voice, "*Che vuoi?*" Yet I must own that this worthy ruminant had nothing to do with witchcraft, and its grumbling meant no more than, "Give me bread or cake." But such dainties are not plentiful in times of siege, and an owner of a cake, or even of a stale bun, would have devoured it with delight. The poor brute appeared to be very much put out at its lack of success, and to wonder why it was being deprived of its provender.

The elephants also were in very bad humour. The largest was fighting its keeper, who was trying to make it go in, and the two others looked uncommonly queer. They had become exceedingly thin, and their skin was a great deal too large for their frames. The gray skin, cracked like dried clay, formed heavy folds at the joints, like an ill-fitting coat. Long wrinkles furrowed their thighs, and their ears, with their thick membranes,

fell down either side of their huge bald heads like frayed and blackened standards. They kept waving their trunks that looked like giant leeches, and their tails at the same time, these recalling the queues formerly worn by hussars and postilions. They had in vain stretched their flexible proboscides towards the public, and now they angrily turned their backs upon the sight-seers; but these manifestations of wrath proving insufficient, they were trumpeting furiously. The trumpeting of an elephant is the most strange, terrifying, and dread noise that can be heard; if one does not know what it is and hears it suddenly, it fills the bravest with terror. It is impossible to say at first what it is, and whether it comes from heaven or hell, whether it is the roar of thunder or a subterranean rumbling. It swells like an organ pedal note or bursts out like the blast of the trumpets round Jericho, with strident uproar that deafens one. It is the very voice of an antediluvian monster, that has escaped the flood and preserved the vigour of primitive life. On this particular day, the elephants were proving themselves decidedly unreasonable, and their harsh trumpeting put to flight the rhinoceros, whose horned carapace I had barely time to get a glimpse of from behind. What

is the use of making such a row because you have had a few mouthfuls of bread less than usual? Do you not understand, ye wise animals, that our city is invested?

Within their rustic huts and trellised enclosures, in which winter had left some green grass, I found the llamas, the vicunas, the antelopes, the Canadian moose, the kiangs, the zebras, and all the movable estate of the Zoölogical Gardens in their entirety, and, in addition, wombats, and a curious animal, between a tapir and a wild boar, with which I am unacquainted, and which has been brought from Australia, the land of the black swan, the ornithorhynchus, the opossum, the kangaroo, and other zoölogical eccentricities. The "Monkey Palace," as it was formerly called, had lost a large proportion of its population; the baboons, the mandrills, the bonnet-apes, the cynocephali, the long-tailed monkeys, the sapajous, the papions, the marmosets, had been decimated by the cold and numbers of them had succumbed to lung diseases. The aviaries had retained the greater number of their guests, which did not seem to be disturbed by the distant sound of the cannonade, so soon to be replaced by the shriek and bursting of shells.

As it was growing late, I retraced my steps by a different way in order to get back to the river steamer, which, on excursions like this, is greatly to be preferred to a bus, and as I walked I listened to the chatter of a small boy of six or seven years of age, hanging on to his mother's skirts, and looking at the animals in their enclosures. He stopped at every label and said to the young mother, "Would you eat that one, mother?" And as he spoke the young carnivorous being's eyes glittered with desire. His mother would reply: "These animals are not intended to be eaten. These are very rare, costly, and pretty creatures, and it would be necessary to go very far away to get others." The child remained silent, but as he came opposite a zebra, a deer, a mountain sheep, or an elk, he would again repeat his question without fail, "Would you eat that one, mother?" I suspect the little rascal must have been first cousin to Fanfan Benoîton who when asked, "Whom do you love most, your father or your mother?" replied, "I love meat most."

XIII

HENRI REGNAULT

FEBRUARY, 1871.

BEFORE the siege I was not personally acquainted with Henri Regnault, although I had been one of the first to hail, at its dawn, his talent, the sun of which was to rise so high in the heavens, as though conscious of the short time it was to shine upon the horizon. Although there is a natural sympathy between critics and artists, we had not met, for he was traversing Spain and Morocco in the course of trips that took him far from the Villa Medici, where he made but brief stay, while I was running away from dramatic criticisms in Egypt, Italy, and Switzerland. This was not a very good way to insure our meeting, so one evening he was kind enough to allow a mutual friend to bring him to the attic where I had taken refuge.

Clairin, himself an artist of note, his *fidus Achates*, his comrade in arms, his bosom friend, accompanied him.

Both wore the military harness which every man in Paris who was fit to use a chassepot has worn constantly for more than four months. Regnault was in Tangier when the disaster at Sedan opened to the Prussians the road to the great capital, the brain of the universe, the heart of France. He had just installed himself there in a vast studio with the object of studying thoroughly the Eastern world, still so novel though Decamps, Marilhat, and Delacroix had painted it, the mysterious world of Islam, hitherto closed to art, and in which the noblest and purest types have been perpetuated. Thence it was that he had sent on the "Execution without Trial under the Moorish Kings of Granada," which, alas! proved to be his last work. He might have remained in Tangier, for his having won the Roman scholarship exempted him from military service; he was entitled to preserve his life for the benefit of art, but there are privileges that a generous soul refuses to profit by. He hurried home, in time to be shut up in Paris and to share the dangers run by his friend Clairin.

The word "artist" has been so much misapplied, that one scarcely dares use it in its former laudatory sense to praise a man. Henri Regnault was an artist. He

possessed the *gift*, lacking which the most persevering labour results but in mediocrity; he had imagination, fire, boldness, and the capacity for discovering at the first glance the novel and individual character of things which was invisible to all others. He was by nature, temperament, and turn of mind a learned painter, and, in addition, a man of the world and of good family who made a name long illustrious and splendid in science blaze in the firmament of art. Like Géricault he understood and loved horses, and was a great rider — as was well proved by his equestrian portrait of General Prim. The bold way in which he seated riders upon restive and unruly horses made one shudder and seemed to foretell that he would die a violent death. A passionate lover of music, nature had endowed him, as her beloved child, with the needless gift of a lovely tenor voice that to any other man would have been worth a hundred thousand francs a year.

Henri Regnault was of medium height, rather supple and muscular than athletic. The Parisian climate had not yet deprived his olive complexion of the sunburn he had gained in the hot countries. His features, pleasant and engaging, rather than classically regular, were lighted up by a pair of brown eyes; his black hair fell

in curling ringlets over his low, broad, masterly brow, a regular brow of antiquity. A fine beard and whiskers framed in and completed a face that led the least observant to say, even though they did not know he was Regnault, "That man must be somebody."

We began to talk about Spain and Morocco, and, while chatting, Regnault, seated on the side of the bed — the Western divan — in my room where often there are not chairs enough for my visitors, was playing with my little Havana poodle that had at once perceived he was fond of animals. He was describing Tangier, in the way painters have of making every word tell, and using them with a touch at once accurate and significant. One of the pictures created by the artist's words has remained in my memory like a brilliant water-colour sketch done on the spot. It was a line of low houses with flat terraces, like blocks of chalk, with an intensely blue sky for a background. Above the terraces were outlined in strange and startling fashion the necks of camels, their bodies concealed by the houses in the foreground. These necks moving forward of themselves with the familiar swaying of the humped animal that is described by the periphrase "the ship of the desert," had the most fantastic and unreal aspect im-

aginable. Regnault's brief description gave me a perfect view of that street in Tangier, and for a few moments, in the depths of our Paris winter, I felt myself plunged in the warm atmosphere of the East. A sudden burst of sunlight was projected on the wall, as in the paintings of Decamps or Pieter de Hoogh.

After diverse meanderings, the talk fell upon Goya. It so happened that I had in my room a superb copy of the *Estragos y desastres de la guerra* which Philippe Burty, who owns all things that are beautiful in the most perfect condition, had lent to me. The album was placed on the table, and Regnault, who had seen some plates from it in Spain, but not the complete work, which it is difficult to find, began to look through it, reading out the short inscriptions, ironical or sinister, written at the foot of the etchings often in pencil, for most of the plates are proofs before letters. He stopped at one that represented a house smashed in by a shell, the floors falling in, and carrying with them, head down, a mother pressing her babe to her breast, the *criada*, and the husband, pell-mell with the shattered furniture — a subject that was ere long to become for us terribly topical, and which the Spanish painter has rendered in that mingled realistic and imaginative style

which is characteristic of him. Regnault admired the boldness of the foreshortening of the parts seen from below and the strange grace which the artist manages to endow women with, even in the midst of utmost horrors. He also noted the wonderfully noble pose of the young married woman, who is kneeling and being shot to death with her whole family, her grandmother, her babe, the nurse, and the servants. The poor devils strangled by the garrote, their navaja hanging from their neck, and bearing on their breast these words, "For a knife," attracted his attention, but he dwelt longest upon a plate of grandiose and sinister effect: a battle-field strewn with dead bodies, being examined in attitudes of despair, by an old man and an old woman whose face is heavily shadowed by her hood; no doubt a father and a mother seeking their son among the dead. A sombre sky, with a band of livid light on the horizon, stretches over this scene of desolation like a funeral pall edged with silver. At the bottom is the terribly laconic inscription: *Enterrar y callar* — "Bury and be silent," a maxim intended for the conquered, the appositeness of which comes home to us. The young artist remained silent for a time before turning the page. Did he have a vague presentiment of his own fate?

Then he lightly shook his curly head, and went on looking over the collection. The amazing nightmare that uprises in a whirl of fantastic and hideous larvæ, the grimaces of all the illusions of life, a skeleton with a few bits of flesh yet adhering to its bones, emerging partly from its half-opened grave, and tracing upon a paper with its clawlike finger the single word *nada* — nothing — as a piece of information from the other world, suggested to him a number of reflections upon Goya's peculiar fancy. Ten having struck, which is a late hour on a siege evening, he rose and took leave, after having cordially shaken hands with his friend Clairin and the comrade who had brought them both to see me.

This first interview, in which I was charmed by the amiable simplicity of his manners, his natural wit, and the sense of superiority which one felt in his presence, was also the last I had with Regnault; I never saw him again and never can see him again. I made his acquaintance just in time to lose him, and just enough to increase the bitterness of my regret. I have to mourn the friend as well as the great artist, for we had already become friends at the end of the couple of hours we had spent together. I felt it to be so, and,

now a whole valuable future of sympathetic intercourse is closed to me.

Had Henri Regnault lived, I should not have mentioned these small private details that would have had no interest under the circumstances, but I am sure I shall be forgiven for having drawn, after a single interview, the silhouette of that amiable face that has vanished for ever.

Assuredly in the course of the disastrous times we have been going through, there have been many irreparable deaths, and losses that will make hearts bleed unceasingly: there have been made many blanks that will not be filled for many a day, many a name will not be heard in answer to the roll-call, and it is true that when given for the country, the life of the most obscure man is of as great worth as the life of the most illustrious; nevertheless it may be said that the severest loss entailed upon us by the siege has been the death of Regnault. In spite of his mad bravery, he had escaped the dangers of the defence, and fell on the supreme day in front of the fatal wall at Buzenval, killed by the last of the Prussian bullets — a cruel piece of refinement on the part of the evil fate which pursues us.

HENRI REGNAULT

With Henri Regnault disappears the possibility of a new future for painting. Had the young master lived longer, the face of art might have been modified or changed. In the world of colour and form he had opened up hitherto unperceived vistas and prospects. Tone relations, unnoticed by painters, were plain to the eyes of this wondrously endowed artist who possessed, to use Swedenborg's expression, the gift of "correspondence." He saw the very soul of colour where others beheld but the body of it, and he was able to recognise the secret affinities of shades under what appeared to be dissimilar. He brought out the individual and personal characteristics of subjects, drawing them out in full relief and showing them in a novel and out-of-the-way light, without destroying their charm, as the painters of the Romanticist school too frequently did. No one understood better than he did the exotic seduction of barbaric picturesqueness or had penetrated more deeply into the understanding of the ideal of the Orient.

No definitive judgment can be passed on the work of an artist who was stopped in his first strides, even though these were like unto those of the gods in Homer who reached the ends of the world in four of them; but since the day when, in competition for the Roman

scholarship, he had painted "Thetis bringing the arms to her son Achilles," a work already so remarkable for the delicacy and refinement of the colouring, Regnault had made immense progress. The portrait of the "Lady in Red," standing out from a background formed of a red curtain, the equestrian portrait of General Prim, the delightful little portrait of a "Duchess in Pink," the "Judith slaying Holophernes," and the "Salome," in the last Salon, proved how great a master was the young fellow, not twenty-seven years old, who was yet a student at the Villa Medici. Never had a more striking and incontestably original genius revealed itself so suddenly to the public. Every one of his paintings, admired and criticised, had aroused the sensation always caused by remarkable works that necessarily contain something of "that shocking beauty" which alarms routine. Regnault's name had become famous: he was the event of the season; his influence was already making itself felt, and he would soon have impelled art in a new direction.

His last work, which is also his masterpiece, "An Execution without Trial under the Moorish Kings of Granada," having reached too late the exhibition of works sent by the students in the French art school

at Rome, was seen there but for a few days, and was seen but by a small number of persons, for the disasters of the war were already engrossing all minds. The work, so amazingly bold and so startlingly effective, failed to make much of a sensation, and I may therefore reprint in this place, as an unpublished document, the following portion of an article which appeared on September 8, 1870, and in which will be seen the effect produced upon me, told with all the warmth of the moment, by the last work Regnault was to paint: —

"A white marble stairway, comprising a few steps, forms the foreground of the picture, of which it occupies the full breadth. It leads to a hall of Arabic architecture, in the style of the Hall of the Abencerrages or the Hall of *las dos Hermanas* in the Alhambra at Granada, the vaulting fretted with arabesques and honeycombings. The whole of the background blazes with a reflected light that tells of brilliant sunshine and great heat outside. This lovely place, where has just been carried out a sinister deed, seems to be plunged in profound silence; it is, as it were, filled with the solitude and the mystery of the seraglio. The crime and the chastisement will alike remain ignored once the mutes shall have borne away the body and washed up the

blood. No eye has seen, no ear has heard aught; the victim and the executioner were alone together. The head that has just fallen was perchance one of the fourteen that the Head of the Faithful has the right to cut off every day, without assigning any reason for his action; the head of a traitor, of a murderer, or of a sacrilegious person whose crime must not be revealed.

"The head, separated from the trunk, has rolled down the stair, the body writhing in the last agony and seen foreshortened. By the body, a few steps higher up, stands the executioner who is wiping the blade of his sword. Such, briefly, is the outline of the composition.

"The Justicer, for the name of executioner cannot fairly be given to the noble and majestic figure, is a very dark complexioned Moor, wearing a red fez, under which shows the edge of a white skull-cap, and having on no other garment than a gandourah, or long gown, of a faded rose-colour, a discoloured, wan, dead rose like that of a dried leaf, and extraordinarily harmonious. The gandourah, open above, allows to be seen a strongly built chest and mighty pectoral muscles that testify to remarkable strength. With a superb gesture, he is slowly passing his Damascus *flittah* upon

the partially lifted fold of his robe, lighted by reflected light from below, and tinted with an orange luminous hue against which shows the lower portion of his muscular brown legs. Turning his head aside somewhat, he casts from his loftier position, upon the fallen body, an undefinable glance, at once contemptuous and sad, of gentle and dreamy ferocity, filled with Oriental fatalism: 'It was written!' but absolutely devoid of anger or indignation.

"On the contrary, powerless rage and furious hatred are visible in the glance which the severed head casts back at the living one. The mouth is twisted convulsively, the features are contracted in hideous fashion, and the bluish tones of the shaven skull impart to the head a strange and awesome look. The body of the victim has slipped down the steps, and his arms, thrown back, half conceal the stump of the neck whence spurts the blood that spreads out in red pools upon the whiteness of the marble. This spot of red, incredibly rich in colour, is the tonic note, the dominant of the painting. In this place the blood has spurted out fiercely, splashing over the steps; there it spreads out more; farther on, it is flowing in long streamlets or coagulating in thick drops. It is unimaginably true;

the young artist must have seen a beheading with a yataghan in Tangier, and it might even be thought it was a sight of that sort which suggested to him the idea of this painting.

"To place such a great splash of blood in the centre of his work is a rare piece of resolute audacity, but horror in this case is not synonymous with disgust. From the point of view of art it is a beauty. As I looked upon the splendid tones, I thought of Homer's comparison of blood flowing like purple skeins upon Menelaus' ivory thighs, and Alfred de Musset's line —

'And stained thy marbles with their blood, O Paros!'

came back to my mind, just as the splendid gesture of the Justicer had recalled to me the avenging angel 'wiping his blade on the clouds' in the closing lines of 'Ratbert.'"

With reference to the "Execution without Trial," in which the dominating note is a blood-stain, M. Paul de Saint-Victor has pointed out that the subjects selected by our young artist are usually ferocious and sanguinary: Judith and Holophernes, Salome, holding in her lap the basin in which is to fall the head of the Baptist, the mysterious Beheading on the steps

of the Alhambra — in all these brilliant works death has enwrapped itself in the magnificent carelessness of the East, and murder is done amid all the splendours of the palette, in the shimmering of gold, brocade, and gems.

I may be allowed to point to a singular coincidence which accords with the meaning that Regnault's death has attached to this choice of funereal subjects: General Prim was killed by a gun-shot a few days before the artist who had painted a portrait of him that Velasquez might have signed. The model preceded the painter to a bloody grave by but a short time.

As for us who are left, we have the bitter regrets and the thoughts of that wondrous bloom cut off, of that great future that has been destroyed. Henri Regnault has lived long enough, however, for he leaves three or four masterpieces, and his fame is assured. He began as a genius, and died like a hero.

XIV

THREE UNPUBLISHED WATER-COLOURS

March, 1871.

WHEN the life of an artist has been cut short as suddenly as poor Regnault's, after the bringing forth of a few brilliant works that suffice to make him famous, one eagerly seeks out every luminous trace of his passage he may have left, in the way of sketches, drawings, water-colours, bits, germs of future thought, with the view of restoring, in imagination, so promising a talent. But for that last cartridge he was bound to use up, but for his fatal turning back towards the enemy's lines when the retreat had sounded, Regnault would have had many a year in which to produce, for his was a robust nature and an energetic character, though mayhap a somewhat adventurous one. He would have made his full worth known, he would have exercised a legitimate influence, and critics would not be reduced to indulge in æsthetic

conjectures as to the direction he would have made art follow. But he has vanished like a meteor that long dazzles the eye; for him there is no future, and the past alone exists. The final date has been inscribed in black letters upon the white stone.

I have been favoured with a view of the last works executed by his bold and swift hand, the ready tool of his prompt will. They are three large water-colours, done between one reconnaissance and another, between a going on and a coming off guard, since the time the artist left Tangier. It would naturally be supposed that the young painter, excited by the spectacle of war, which was new to him, reproduced some episode in the fights in which he had taken part so actively and so brilliantly; yet this is not the case. Modern war, carried on by mathematical means, unornamented weapons, ugly uniforms, and settled evolutions, could have but little picturesque attraction for Regnault, who was in love with Oriental colour and fancifulness. Thus it was that, through an operation of the mind easy to follow, his imagination carried him back to the land of light. The gray heavens, the ground, muddy or glazed with livid snow against which stood out the silhouettes of the combatants, the smoke of

powder mingling with the fog, did not offer tones rich enough for his glowing palette. It is possible that if he had lived longer the poetry of such sombre and gloomy effects would have impressed itself upon him and inspired him with a subject for a wonderful sketch. But the feeling of duty, hatred of the invader, chivalrous courage, and the all-powerful attraction of danger, to which Regnault was peculiarly sensible, alone filled his mind at that time when the artist in him disappeared in the citizen. A few notes found on his person after the battle testify to his manly and firm resolve on this point; he had accepted all the consequences of the sacrifice he had made.

It seems as though sinister omens had been meant to foretell the young artist's heroic and violent death. A broad splash of blood fills up the centre of his last picture, and the subject of his first water-colour is a head that has been cut off, — a study made in the dissecting-room and recalling Géricault's fine anatomical fragments. Straightway, without the least hesitation, without any preliminary groping, Regnault, who had never dipped his brush in the glass of water-colour painters, had assimilated all the resources of that art with marvellous rapidity of intuition, had enlarged

them and forced them to serve him. It is well known that it is extremely difficult to paint a life-size head in water-colours. Now this study, which might have been made for the purpose of painting a "Descent from the Cross" or an "Entombment," is washed in in tones that are vigorous although kept within the scale of death tints, and took the artist but two hours to complete. The close-cut hair, the mustaches, and the small tuft give a military look to the head cut off by the assistant. Similar ones are to be seen in the foregrounds of battle scenes.

These splendid water-colours take us clean into the Orient. They appear to have been painted under the changeless African sky, and not under the gloomy pall of mists that lowered over Paris during the months the siege was going on. The first of the three water-colours I am examining represents a young woman lying on a divan, dressed in a costume composed chiefly of white transparent stuffs with opaque stripes. All this whiteness produces the effect of the camellia surrounded with different flowers that is placed in the centre of a ball bouquet; they draw and concentrate the light, and their brilliancy spreads in soft undulations upon the brighter surrounding hues. The woman her-

self, half lying down in a pose rendered more supple by the languor of the kief, recalls the lovely Haoua, whose exquisite portrait Fromentin has drawn in "A Year in the Sahel," with a literary skill that equals his talent as a painter. It is impossible to admire too much the astonishing harmony of the stuffs, the carpets, the accessories, of colours apparently disparate, but the contrast of which melts into perfect accord. No painter, since Eugène Delacroix painted his "Women of Algiers," has cast more limpid shadows over the shimmering of a rich Moorish interior.

The subject of the second water-colour is also an interior, but wholly different in meaning and values. On a divan covered with brocade, silk, or morocco leather cushions, is seated, or rather is squatting, a young man, bare to the belt, almost as dark as a mulatto, and resting his arm on his knee with a movement at once most bold and skilful. It is a strange figure. A sort of carelessly wound turban covers his brow with its broad folds and casts mysterious shadows over his eyes. He looks like an Eastern Manfred or Don Juan who has perchance been acquainted with some other civilisation, and has sought a new experience in his weariness. As I looked on that frame,

spare, muscular, consumed by passion, I thought of Hassan, the hero of Alfred de Musset's "Namouna," who, exchanging the cigar for hasheesh, had repaired to the Land of the Sun to impart some warmth to his scepticism. It is not likely that the artist had this in mind, but his water-colour does suggest the notion: the weariness of voluptuousness, the longing for the unknown, the lassitude of artificial paradises, as Baudelaire called them, are visible on his worn face, still youthful in spite of the excesses he has indulged in.

On the thick carpets that cover the floor is stretched out a young woman, who, leaning her shoulders against the divan, and dressed in a black gandourah with hood, half opened on the bosom, of a whiteness recalling the moon emerging from behind a cloud, is nonchalantly touching the cords of a guzla with her henna-tinted fingers as she accompanies herself. The song issues sigh-like from her inattentive lips; she feels that she is not being listened to, and is following out her dream. Wide apart indeed are these two beings, both young and beautiful, who are placed at each end of a divan.

In spite of the violence of the tones maintained in the shadow with a superb mastery of colour, the luxury

that surrounds them is dulled in its richness, marked by sombre ardour and has something of a funereal seriousness. It is a wealth of curtains and portières made of stuffs wrought by the most perfect art of the Orient, magnificent tissues, Smyrna, Kabylia, or Turkey carpets, trays inlaid with mother-of-pearl, arms studded with gems, Khorassan narghilés, and yet there is something tragical in all that mass of splendour. The room might well be the scene of a mad fit of jealousy or of a murder, and blood would not show upon the sombre purple carpets.

The third water-colour is a mere palette bouquet, a mystic nosegay of Oriental colours that have bloomed out in a beam of light. It represents a cadi's wife or an odalisque standing in the centre of her room and apparently enchanted with her beauty and the sheen of her costume. And it has been dashed off with incomparable freshness and limpidity; the painter, while utilising the happy chances of water-colours, has kept to his purpose.

I must also mention a few most clever and truthful pencil portraits, especially one of a young girl on horseback, extremely elegant, which testifies to aptitudes in the young artist that remind one of Géricault.

This is what he has left behind him, but through his friend, Clairin, we have been made aware of what he proposed to do and what he was about to execute: a sort of personification and triumph of Islam in the times of the Caliphs of Spain. He had built in Tangier an immense studio with a view to carrying out his project. The canvas was to be thirty-three feet long, and proportionately high — something after the style of one of Paolo Veronese's great banquets — and it was already in course of preparation.

Before starting upon a picture, Regnault, thanks to his rapid intuition, saw it in its completed state, and described it with great fulness of detail, resembling in this respect the crazy characters in Hoffmann and Balzac, who saw on a white canvas a masterpiece invisible to other spectators. But there was this difference between him and Master Frenhofer and the painter of "The Court of Artus," that his canvas was speedily covered with splendid colour and the subject appeared just as if a veil had been torn apart.

The background of the picture was to be filled with a palace adorned with all the wonders of Arab architecture: slender pillars, heart-shaped arches, panels of lace-work wrought out in stucco, niches with painted

and gilded stalactites, inscriptions from the Koran in Cufic characters mingled with flowers, and overlaid azulejos; in a word, a summary of the Alhambra at Granada and the Alcazar at Seville: fountains splashing in basins of ribbon alabaster, tall vases in which grew rare flowers, all the fairy marvels that the East accumulates in the palace of the Caliphs. In the centre opened out a great archway, its cedar gates forming complicated symmetries miraculously worked out and inlaid with silver. To this superb archway led a broad stair of white marble, the lower steps of which were laved by the waters of a stream. A gilded galley with quaint prow and poop, its striped carpets and draperies dipping in the current, brought to the foot of the steps the tributary chiefs, the vassals from Africa and Spain, dressed in brilliant armour, starred with rubies and turquoises, draped in velvet, brocade, silks, and fine white woollens, splendent with gold and silver under a flood of light.

On the steps of the stair stood groups of slaves, prisoners and captive females of every race, some half nude, others disappearing partly under the quivering, sparkling shimmer of golden gauze rayed with a sunbeam, beauteous as Judith, weird as Salome, to say

nothing of the new types discovered or dreamt of by the artist. Add to all this coffers inlaid with mother-of-pearl, from which stream strings of pearls, perfume-burners in filigree work, cups filled with dinars and tomaums, silver vases, jasper ewers, dishes of Balearic earthenware, iridescent with all the colours of the rainbow, floods of stuffs, embroidered, striated, laminated with gold or silver wire, saddles and harness bossy with gold, quantities of weapons more precious than gems, flowers that would make the nightingale unfaithful to the rose, pigeons, their necks ringed with diamonds, gazelles gazing with wide-eyed amazement, and you will have some idea of what Regnault intended to paint.

In the centre of the picture, through the half opened doors, was seen in a transparent penumbra, like an idol within its temple, the Emir El Mumenim, receiving the tribute and the homage, impassible and apparently unnoticing.

This mysterious figure, which was to secure the unity of the composition by centring in itself the display of luxury and splendour, made me think, as Clairin described it from Regnault's account, of the superhumanly abstracted attitude of Sultan Abdul-Medjid

during the ceremony of the Courban Beïram, when the Court dignitaries came to kiss the end of his sash fastened to one of the arms of his throne.

Alas! Regnault's marvellous dream will never be realised, but as I closed my eyes, I fancied I could see it, with the poet's inner vision, radiant in its great gilded frame on the walls of the Great Room in the coming Exhibition.

XV

VICTOR GIRAUD

FEBRUARY, 1871.

THESE are days of painful surprises, and one scarcely dares open the paper for fear of learning of some new loss. The sad presentiment rarely deceives one: there was a friend, not seen for some weeks past, believed to be alive and well and to have escaped the perils of war; whose name had not appeared in the death lists. Unhappily it is not so; you learn of his death, before being apprised of his illness, by a black-bordered letter, and your grief is increased by the sorrow of not having had the opportunity of pressing the wan hand a last time. You were just returning from a funeral, and with eyes still wet you have again to take the road to the cemetery, ill yourself, your heart bleeding, and wondering you have survived.

It is not bullets and shells only that kill. A heroic death amid the smoke of battle and the intoxication of the

fight is not granted to every one. The bitterly cold nights spent standing in the snow, in the icy north wind, on the ramparts, while on guard, have claimed more victims than the enemy's fire. How many, wounded unto death by the frozen darts, have passed away silently in their deserted homes, far from their families, and without glory to console their last moments by placing the sacred star upon their breast, from which the last breath is issuing. If they have not been fortunate enough to fall like soldiers on the field of battle, they, unknown martyrs to duty, have none the less given up their lives. Though their blood has not flowed, though their death is ascribed to pneumonia or bronchitis, the fatherland is bound to be equally grateful to them for their sacrifice. All the losses cannot be reckoned up, because the battle is over, and more than one who seemed to have been spared, has lain down, ill, worn out, exhausted, not again to rise. Of these was Victor Giraud.

He was the son of Eugène Giraud. In that family, as in Vernet's, every one was a painter; Charles, Eugène's brother, is himself a very good painter of interiors, but the one who appeared destined to make the name most luminous and glorious was Victor. He

was richly endowed by nature, and he had added experience to his gifts by labour that was more and more persevering. Although he has been cut off in the very flower of his age, at thirty, he had time to show his worth and to cause men to regret the artist as well as the man. I knew him quite young, when scarcely more than a child, and the friendship which bound me to his father, whom I met so often in my years of travel in Spain, Turkey, and elsewhere, had naturally been continued with the son, whose progress I watched with peculiar interest. It was a pleasure to me to watch the development and growth of his talent between one exhibition and the next, a talent that had already given serious pledges to the present and on which the future might reckon safely. I used to meet him in the evening in society or at first performances of a play, for after the labour of the day and the silence of the studio, he liked to enjoy the blaze of lights, the elegance and the movement of life. He was interested in matters intellectual and was better up in dramatic matters than many a professional critic. He was a handsome young fellow, with an abundance of thick fair hair, falling upon his forehead, a curly beard, regular, well cut features, cast in an antique mould and recalling the bust

of Lucius Verus. He had the look of strength in slightness, although in reality, in spite of his great pectoral muscles, his chest was delicate.

Yet no one could have foreseen so sad and so swift an end to a life begun under the happiest auspices and on which heaven seemed to smile. One night, on the ramparts, he caught cold, during a turn of duty lighted by the icy and deadly moonlight reflected by the snow. He fought the disease as long as he could, for in such times as these, illness appears to be a sort of desertion and the refuge of skulkers, a thing unbearable to a proud and generous mind, but the malady proved the stronger and he was compelled to forsake the camp-bed for the death couch.

In his nights of suffering, when the delirium of fever began to make his thoughts wander, the poor artist would murmur: "Lucky fellow, Regnault, for he at least was killed by a bullet!" It was the noble envy of the dying, worthy to be admired; but death has its favourites and gives them for funeral crown a laurel wreath.

Art has richly paid its debt to the fatherland in this fatal war. Its dearest sons have fallen in the flower of their age, full of boldness, genius and fire, and the

future of painting has perchance thus been compromised for a long time. A new school was growing up in succession to the Romanticist school, deeply in love with colour, thinking of yet undreamt-of combinations and contrasts of tones, and looking at nature in an individual and striking way. Without seeking to imitate Regnault or Fortuny, the Spanish painter who refused to exhibit his pictures, but who is none the less well known to artists, Victor Giraud was himself working in the same direction. Like Goethe, he had a theory of colours which is most fully set out in his painting called "The Charmer," one of the most noteworthy in the last Salon. Every one is acquainted with the subject of it: an Egyptian bird-charmer is making his little charges perform their tricks in presence of an assemblage of patrician ladies and handsome young Romans in a gallery embellished with rare plants, Greek vases, and decorative paintings. The figures were life-size, and the women exhibited all the refinements of the *mundus muliebris*, which has called forth so many invectives from moralists and satirical poets. These female types, of a delicate beauty heightened by the artifices of the coquetry of antiquity, had the expression of deep satiety, aristocratic disdain, and frivolous per-

versity that is characteristic of periods of decadence. It can readily be understood how fully the young painter turned to account the gems, the head-dresses, the tunics, the embroideries, and all the sheen and discord of a luxury which he had harmonised by an ingenious use of conciliating tones, after the manner of the Orientals, who avoid the collocation of uncongenial colours by means of a mere thread of silver or gold.

"The Slave Dealer," treated in historical proportions, had proved most successful at one of the previous Salons. It was remarkable for the understanding of exotic types which was one of the artist's qualities. An admirable subject for a painter was that young sated patrician, in search of the impossible, to whom are being shown young maids from every land and of every hue, from the white marble of the Greek to the tawny bronze of the Abyssinian. Victor Giraud had treated it in most brilliant fashion, with his characteristic feeling for composition, exquisite and uncommon colouring, and marvellous dexterity of execution. It was antique, but freer, easier, and as it were rejuvenated and renovated by modern intelligence, as in André Chénier's works.

Nor is forgotten that tragic scene in costumes of the

days of the Directory, in which a jealous husband killed his wife's lover on the stairs, while she fell fainting adown the balusters, with a movement inspired by that of Kitty Bell on learning of Chatterton's death, in Alfred de Vigny's play. This singularly bold painting greatly preoccupied public attention.

Now his work is interrupted; the palette has fallen from Victor Giraud's dying hand. His memory will be kept green by three or four pictures; Regnault himself has not left many more. Fate was miserly of life to them, but they made good use of it, and though struck down so young, both managed to find time to prove their worth and to let us guess how many plans and ideas for future work they had.

The other day, Tuesday, February 21, on Shrove-Tuesday! — for chance indulges at times in a bitter irony that seems the result of set purpose on the part of a diabolical wickedness, — the portal of Saint-Philippe du Roule was draped in black. A silver "G" shone upon the funereal drapery, and the friends of the deceased, old and young, worn thin by famine, crawled towards the church like spectres.

I stood close by the catafalque under which lay him whom I had known, but a few months before, young,

handsome, smiling, and beloved; and at that time had any one said to me: "It is you who will sprinkle holy water upon his coffin," I should have made a gesture of negation and doubt.

"The young are in a hurry, the young march first,"

says Victor Hugo, the great poet, and I could not help repeating the line between the responses of the liturgy. The candles were burning at the back of the choir, draped in mourning, like faint stars against a black sky; the priests, wearing dalmatics with silver crosses, were performing the sacred rites with slow gestures, while the voices of the boy choristers rose to heaven colourless, shrill, and sharp like the prelude to "Lohengrin." At times the deep base of the organ uttered low lamentations, stifled sighs of the soul, sobs of grief that will not be soothed. The effect would have been depressing but that now and then a winged note soared luminous over the sadness and told of hope and immortality.

At the elevation of the host the rolling of muffled drums suddenly broke out with deep, deadened sound, a virile expression of military sorrow and respect, that moved all hearts and caused many a tear to flow from

eyes that had till then refused to weep. It was his brothers in arms bidding farewell to their comrade.

For my part, while I mourned bitterly over this latest death, an old wound, scarce healed and breaking open anew at the least touch, was bleeding in my heart.

The hemicycle that forms the end of the nave in Saint-Philippe du Roule, contains a "Calvary" as large as that by Tintoretto in the Scuola di San Rocco, a work full of genius and feeling, intense in its melancholy, due to my dear and ever regretted Théodore Chasseriau, whose death has not been sufficiently felt, although high art deplores it and declares it to be irreparable. He also died very young, at the age when died Raphael and Lord Byron. Gustave Moreau, the painter of "Œdipus," has represented the apotheosis of the young genius he loved and understood, in a painting filled with funereal and penetrating charm, entitled "The Youth and Death." Alas! it is in vain that, as one advances in life and the companions of one's youth fall by the wayside, one has friends among those who might be one's sons! They die before you, and you have to follow them to the grave.

After having pressed old Giraud's hand — he was called old Giraud to distinguish him from his son —

pressed it silently, for what is there to say to a father borne down by so great a grief? I slowly took my way homewards through the Champs-Élysées, weighed down by deep despair and sadness. From time to time sounds hoarse, choking, and painful as the death-rattle struck on my ears; they were produced by a couple of poor wan, ragged children who were blowing cowherds' horns, purchased, no doubt, with money obtained by begging.

Doleful indeed is the sound of these earthen horns, called, I know not why, "the Carnival's joyous summons," and which would be more in place in a funeral procession. Yes, it was the last week before Lent, and the two street-Arabs, not well informed on the situation of things, but acquainted with the traditions of the Carnival, were trying to celebrate Shrove-Tuesday in their own way, and with the best intentions in the world, I feel sure, for the street-Arab is a patriot. They soon noticed the ill effect produced by their discordant notes in the silence and mourning of the city; they blew more softly, as if afraid of the noise they were making, and ended by putting their horns in their pockets.

XVI

GUSTAVE DORÉ

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE SIEGE

IT would be a mistake to suppose that the progress of art was stayed during the course of the serious events we have just witnessed. I have already spoken of Falguière's snow statue, of Moulin's bust, modelled out of the same white stuff that covered the glacis of the ramparts, of Puvis de Chavanne's most touching and poetic compositions, and of the admirable water-colours in which poor Regnault seemed to be striving to warm himself in the sunshine of the East during the long icy cold hours of duty at the outposts, but I am far from having mentioned all that was done. Bracquemond, who handles the etcher's graver in so masterly a fashion, transferred to copper the novel aspects imparted by the defensive works to the approaches to the bastions and to the military zone, and which he had had full opportunity to observe during his numerous turns of duty. Many other names are

at present unknown, but will come to the light at the next exhibition.

An artist's mind works incessantly, even without his being aware of it, and in the middle of a fight he will note an effect which escapes others. Through his incessant communion with nature he develops a remarkable acuteness of perception which acts without volition on his part. He never loses sight of form and colour even in the rush of the fiercest engagement; his memory, accustomed to grasp lines, receives as it runs the ineffaceable reflection of things. Nor does this fact prevent his doing his duty to the full, being brave, a good comrade, and full of kindness. Should a brother in arms fall wounded, he carries him off from under fire, and shelters him behind a wall. But the attitude of the limp body, the pallor of the face, the lime on the wall, damaged by the shells, against which rests the head, the tone of the blood flowing over the snow or the grass, the relation between the earth and the sky at that particular moment, are reflected in his eyes as in an instantaneous photograph. As he watches the bursting of a shell he takes to wondering what combination of colours could render the sinister light. This peculiar tendency makes the artist wonderfully

fitted to preserve and reproduce the physiognomy of events at those crucial moments when the imminence of disaster leads the stoutest hearts to think only of defending themselves desperately. The artist takes part in the action, but at the same time he sees the spectacle. The slaughter, in the course of which death may come to him, — and Regnault's fate is there to prove it, — is a battle, no doubt, but it is also a picture.

Of course the decoration of public buildings, churches, and palaces, official and private commissions, and important works of illustration came to a stop during those days so sombre and uncertain when the most obstinate to hope could not, unless they were demented, count on seeing the morrow. Each artist, resigning himself to the scanty fare of the siege and reckoning on no remunerative profit, freely indulged his own individual fancy, noting down whatever had struck him and rendering it with fullest sincerity, totally forgetful of the public, that itself was given over to other preoccupations. Thus it is that Gustave Doré, not absorbed this year in illustrating handsome books in gilt and tooled covers, which his inexhaustible fancy enriches, has turned out great epic compositions, reproduced by photography, in which the artist, mingling

reality and allegory, has represented the invasion, the call to arms, the resistance, and other kindred subjects.

But any one who should suppose that Doré was satisfied with doing this cannot be acquainted with him. His fecund imagination, served by prodigious technical skill, constantly urges him to series of new works. Although he has times of dreamy or contemplative idleness, prolonged repose would be wearisome to him. Therefore it was that I shrewdly guessed that in the intervals between one turn of duty and another he must have done enough himself to fill a whole exhibition; so, profiting by the privilege to be indiscreet, conferred upon me by a friendship already of long standing — for Doré made his début so young — I made my way into the artist's studio, closed at present, while he is in England where he is receiving a most sympathetic welcome, and I saw I was not mistaken.

Upon easels, placed in the best light, along the wall, but most of them with their faces turned to it, were, in every corner of the great room, great cartoons and canvases in various stages of progress, all connected by their subjects with the same line of thought and appearing to form the epic and picturesque cycle of the first

siege. Above these rose in tiers, and richly framed, paintings by the young master, representing strange and grim characters, and a few of those Alpine landscapes, so brilliantly blooming and so intense in colour, in which the setting sun casts roses upon the whiteness of the mountain summits.

The tranquil sanctuary of art had had a narrow escape recently. On the terrace, filled with flowers, on which Doré is wont to take his walks, the artillerymen of the Commune, who care but little for painting, wished to set up a battery, which would have drawn a return fire undoubtedly, to the great detriment of the paintings and drawings; happily this dangerous fancy was not carried out.

One of the drawings that first attracted me went back to the beginnings of the siege, at the time when the line of investment was being drawn closer and closer, leaving but few gaps open. Vast flocks were hastening towards the city, and their biblical aspect recalled the migrations of nations fleeing from a celestial scourge. These flocks were intended to provide the city with food, the Gargantua city grown the larger on account of the fleeing suburbans who had taken refuge behind its walls, and when one looked at the

tumultuous hurrying on of all these animals destined to the slaughter-house, it might have been thought that the stock of meat would prove inexhaustible.

Gustave Doré's imagination was greatly struck by this sight, so strange and so novel to our civilisation, of a gigantic assemblage of cattle to which South America alone can furnish a parallel when prairie fires drive before them the bewildered hordes of buffaloes. The artist has shown us the multitude of rounded backs, of crescent horns, of broad quarters, pouring into the roads in the Bois de Boulogne like a resistless torrent, under an incessant storm of blows of sticks and in a whirlwind of dust. He has also shown us an army of sheep greater by far than that which the Knight of La Mancha described in such pompous terms to the amazed Sancho, taking it for the host of Miramolin; fleeces undulating as far as the eye can reach, like a sea of wool, in one of those landscapes Doré knows so well how to draw.

Who does not remember that unfortunate fashionable Bois de Boulogne, of yore the swell parade, transformed into a cattle-yard? Yet, after all, it was none the less beautiful, and when a great ox, raising its head with a look of astonishment and anxiety, crossed a deserted

drive and was soon followed by a few of its emboldened companions, the effect produced was quite picturesque. Gustave Doré's admirable drawing will preserve, for the benefit of posterity, this unique aspect of the Bois, which our descendants will hesitate to credit, adding to it a poetical feeling that fills out its truthfulness.

Another drawing displays the panorama of Paris, seen looking down from the plateau of the Montmartre hill, from the mill where were installed the powerful electric lights the beams of which, a livid white, searched the plain in the distance and with their sudden blaze revealed the manœuvres of the Prussians. The vast city, shrouded in smoke and dotted with luminous points faintly indicating in the shadowiness the monuments showing like promontories and reefs on the sea of houses, assumes a formidable and apocalyptic aspect; it looks like the Nineveh or Babylon seen by the prophet in his visions, and over which lowers the black pall of disaster.

One of these drawings has been worked up by the artist, who has got out of it a strikingly effective picture. It is night, and "the dim light that falls from the stars," as Corneille has said in a sublime bit of padding, just allows one to make out the name of the Rue Gay-

Lussac, inscribed upon the corner of a wall. The snow has covered the street with its white shroud, sinister in its whiteness, and bringing out the gloomy gray of the long walls that enclose the gardens, and the empty parts of the streets that end in open fields. In the sombre blue heavens glitter the silver dots like unto frozen tears that tell of an icy-cold night. A few fragments of shells, recently fallen, are strewn over the snow and add to the terror inspired by the darkness, the silence, the solitude, the dread of unpleasant rencounters, and the fear of sudden death that bursts out of the shadow, dazzling like lightning.

Yet there is a figure which casts a queer shadow on the wall as it travels slowly along the deserted street. It is that of a nun, young, delicate, apparently feeble, wasted by the famine due to the siege and the labour of mercy. She is carrying in her arms, wrapped up in a blanket, a sick or wounded child, already well grown, in order to shelter it under some roof less threatened by projectiles. And onwards she goes through the night teeming with peril, beholding in the darkness the Light of the World, drawing supernatural strength from her faith, and straightening herself up under the burden that was bearing her down.

The impression produced by this painting is profound, and the figure of the Sister gliding along the wall remains ineffaceably impressed upon the memory. One feels that the artist has seen what he has painted; he has assuredly met that holy woman on one of his night rounds, and his eye remembered, unconsciously, it may be, the lines of the group, the expression of the face of which he caught a glimpse, the breaking of the folds, the way the shadows were cast. On his return home he made a drawing first, and then the painting, and to the reproduction of the fact itself he added his own feeling. The result is that the nun who is traversing the Rue Gay-Lussac at night, with a sick child in her arms, under a hail of shells, may symbolise, and does symbolise, Christian charity and its unsuspected heroism.

The episode of the removal of the poorer households, leaving the quarters threatened at the time of the bombardment, suggests a flight from an inundation, a conflagration, or other unavoidable disaster. Chairs, tables, boxes, thin mattresses from which the flock is bursting, all the humble utensils indispensable in housekeeping, are piled up pell-mell, in a riot of queer corners, upon hand-barrows drawn, with outstretched necks

and feet slipping in the snow, by the most robust men in the company. The sick, laid out upon the piles of clothing and bundles, have a spectral look and the appearance of shrouded corpses. They are shivering in the icy wind, as cold as though they had already been touched by the finger that closes the eyes and seals the lips. The woeful procession looks like a migrating Indian tribe bearing away its old people wrapped in buffalo-skins; the women follow, pressing to their thin breasts their babes, whom they try to keep warm with a rag of a shawl, and dragging along, in addition, an older child clinging to their skirts. Other fugitives are going on bowed under the weight of a piece of furniture, and sinister and picturesque indeed is the line as it marches onwards in the darkness lit up by the livid reflection of the snow and the red glare of bursting shells.

A composition left almost in the form of a sketch, but to which the utmost finish could add nothing, so plainly is the feeling the artist wished to express felt in the disorder of strokes apparently made at hap-hazard, long kept me interested. The subject is the return of an ambulance after a battle outside the walls — at Champigny, on the Avron Plateau, or at Buzenval. A

haggard, wild-haired woman, erect as a spectre, with the fixed stare of madness in her eyes, is engaged in looking over the wounded with a lantern that blinds them with its sudden blaze. Their faces, wan, decomposed, convulsed by suffering, wrapped up in bandages and compresses, recall the dread faces evoked by Goya from the depths of his darksome etchings. The woman is seeking among the wounded her husband or her son, who is no doubt numbered with the dead, and as she comes up to each ambulance, she indefatigably resumes her examination.

Gustave Doré has not confined himself to reproducing merely the picturesque and episodical side of the siege. He has made drawings of the defensive works, of the installation of the forts, of the armament of the bastions, in a way to satisfy both engineers and painters. History might draw information from his grisaille cartoons, which are at once so accurate and so full of colour, as exact as a geometrical plan and as grandly effective as a mezzotint by Martin. In this series of studies, sketches, and compositions, done at a time when it seemed that all minds were whelmed by one only thought, Gustave Doré has proved that art is incompressible, and that there is no force extant that

can restrain its expansion. Under the fallen ruins of buildings and institutions, and between the blocks of stone smashed by the shells and blackened by fire, one green plant ever is the first to appear, and to bloom out in a brilliant flower: it is Art, immortal as Nature's self.

XVII

SAINT-CLOUD

March, 1871.

I HAD been told that the Prussians had evacuated Saint-Cloud the night before, and yielding to a desire that was very natural after the long imprisonment during the siege, I started, expecting to meet with no hostile face and to find the landscape clear. But I had reckoned without our hosts. At the end of the Sèvres bridge of boats, which was crowded with waggons, I caught sight, and a most disagreeable surprise it was, of three leather helmets with brass spikes topping three clumsy soldiers of stout build, with big legs, big feet, big boots, on the hip a canvas haversack that reminded me of Bertrand's pockets in "Robert Macaire," and carrying their rifles on their shoulders with as much grace as if it had been the broom with which, not so long ago, they used to sweep our streets. Mine eyes had perforce to receive their odious silhouette, which I would willingly efface as one does a spoiled negative, and I passed on with a rush of inward

anger and hatred that was unfortunately powerless, and that my readers can sympathise with.

There were more of the fellows in the guard-house at the entrance to the park, one of the side gates to which stood open. The park was deserted and gloomy, and the only sound audible was that of trees being cut down. Most sinister is the sadness of places filled with remembrances of splendours and festivals. In them one feels falling drop by drop on one's heart the tears of things, for nature weeps. *Sunt lacrymæ rerum*, is Vergil's profoundly melancholy expression.

Nevertheless, this part of the park is not so denuded as might be supposed. Trees have been cut away to allow of a clear range of view, and to facilitate the firing of the batteries placed higher up on the reverse slope of the hill. But the general appearance is not greatly changed, and spring, which is approaching with its greenery, will conceal the cicatrices of the surviving trees and fill up the empty spaces.

The cascade, falling from its reservoir down the marble and rockery steps, and which is very properly admired of the Parisians, has apparently suffered no damage, and the waters will be able to play again

on Sundays, supposing the lead piping has not been stolen by our thrifty foes who never forget anything.

After climbing the slope down which the waters flow, and passing beyond the mason-work of the cascade, I entered upon a portion that has been laid waste with fury. Magnificent trees, two and three centuries old, the giants and patriarchs of the forest, sawn asunder at the foot, have fallen to the ground and lie with their crown of branches upon broken shrubbery and ruined terraces. These trunks, thus cut down, and showing a broad plane of light hue that recalls the tones of human flesh, have a tragical and solemn air. They look like altars whereon is to be sworn undying hatred, and by which is to be invoked Nemesis, the goddess of righteous vengeance.

Having crossed this space through broken stones, rocks, pieces of wood, débris, and refuse of all sorts, I reached the sward that led with a gentle slope from the château to the Lantern of Diogenes, of which no trace remains, and then I beheld with amazement the wreck of a building now scarcely recognisable. Through the openings of the windows, blackened by the flames, is seen the blue or the gray of the sky; the whole of the interior has fallen in. It is even difficult to make out,

upon the façade, the main divisions of the design; two bronze statues alone still stand on their pedestals, in front of the peristyle, like two conscientious sentinels whom it has been forgotten to relieve. The one represents Aurora standing on a small car and casting down flowers; the other a stupid-looking Hercules smashing, with a club that resembles a piece of fire-wood, the ever-growing heads of the hydra. The necks from which the heads have been cut off are pierced with small holes whence spurted jets of water, a proof that this Hercules once figured in some mythological fountain.

The destruction is thorough, and it is quite out of the question to restore the building, for what the shells have left undestroyed, the fire has finished up. The palace is entered by the vestibule, now open to the four winds of heaven, and obstructed with débris, charred beams, iron-work torn out and twisted, and fragments of marble, while the floors, that have fallen in, allow the interior arrangements to be seen as in an architectural section. The furnace pipes and the water pipes, broken in places or emerging from the walls, show like veins in the body of the building; occasionally a mantelpiece has been left clinging to the wall upon

a fragment of the flooring, producing a strange effect. The fury of the fire has evidently been directed, for no blind force can of itself attain to such perfection of ravage and disaster. It has plainly been the work of expert and practical incendiaries, who were carrying out orders to destroy.

In the interior of the court the destroyers have indulged their fancy : some of the statues have lost their heads, others their legs, arms, or eyes, and are scored with horrid cicatrices and reduced to the condition of shapeless trunks calcined like lime. Others again have been spared, Heaven knows why, and smile with the serene indifference of marble amid a scene of desolation rendered more lugubrious still by their own unharmed gracefulness. The glass in three of the great candelabra has remained absolutely intact, but such exceptions are rare, everything having been mutilated, smashed, ground to pieces with scientific wickedness, and if the marauders are let alone they will soon have utterly destroyed every vestige of the materials.

As I was leaving the place that had once been the palace of Saint-Cloud, sorely grieved at the barbarous ruin which Time had had nothing to do with, — for centuries are less destructive than man, — I noticed,

looking out of the buildings formerly containing the domestic offices, the sordidly and cruelly low faces of German Jews, with their greasy hair, their forked beards, their unhealthy complexions, descendants of Judas Iscariot and Shylock, quite capable of cutting off their pound of flesh when their note falls due, thieves' fences and murderer's helpers, traders in pillage, hooking out, with their dirty claws, the lumps of molten metal they found in the ashes. They had that look of animal satisfaction which may be observed in vultures that have gorged themselves to repletion.

I returned into the town of Saint-Cloud through a street the first houses in which did not appear to have suffered greatly from the bombardment and the fire; but it is the outer shell only that has been left standing, and if one looks through a half-opened door, there become visible a gaping void from roof to cellar, and the light playing through the cracks in the walls.

It is impossible, unless one has seen it with one's own eyes, to form any adequate conception of the extent of the destruction. Saint-Cloud should be preserved as a Pompeii of havoc, and people might come there to see what war means. The city is quite uninhabitable, and it seems to me that it is out of the

question to attempt to repair the ruins, for they would crash down at the least touch. The place would have to be razed to the ground and rebuilt from end to end after removing the débris. The streets that ascend towards the church are obstructed by stones, rubbish, beams, awnings, and iron gates torn from their fastenings, and through all this are being made narrow paths, but in many places one has to climb over the wreckage. Houses ripped up have poured out their entrails upon the highway and seem to be striving to stand up, like brave soldiers mortally wounded that will not let themselves fall to the ground; others, with smoke-blackened windows, are one huge crack, like the House of Usher, in Edgar Poe's sinister tale, only the crack extends from the ridge to the ground-floor; the hideous break is visibly widening, and it is plain that the two portions of the wall are about to fall apart and thunder to the earth. There is not a single roof to be seen anywhere; all have been smashed in by shells and devoured by fire. These sudden ruins have not the characteristics of ruins due to abandonment and the wear of time; the passing years have not yet cast over them their soft brown tones; nature has not made their disjointed courses gay with ivy and wild flowers; everything

about them is harsh, bare, violent; the broken plaster is a dead white; the fresh breaks in the stones are of a crude tone that hurts the eye as if it were a raw wound. It is the difference between murder and natural death; these dead, assassinated houses have a heart-rending look that can never be forgotten, and they call out for vengeance with every one of the bleeding lips of their wounds.

Owing to the mighty ruin of the façades, the interior of the houses is seen as it is shown at times on the stage in plays in which a double action is going on. In some of the rooms untouched by the conflagration are visible wall-papers with sprigs of flowers or diapers, chimneypieces with the andirons, family portraits hanging on the walls, a ewer of water upon a dressing-table, household crockery on the shelves of cupboards, mattresses ripped open, chairs placed by the fireside and marking the places of vanished guests, or a chest of drawers ready to fall into the void and kept up in the air by a freak of equilibrium. Innumerable little things tell of the home life in these houses that once were so full of brightness and happiness. I was even able to recognise a lithographed portrait of Louis-Philippe, in a varnished deal frame, still hanging in the third story

of a fallen-in house. Fragments of staircases, as in Piranesi's etchings, lead into emptiness; doors open out upon the heavens, and balconies remain sticking, in dangerous fashion, on dismantled and creviced façades, describing strange arabesques, which photographers, hooded in black like the bearers of the dead, and their heads bent over their apparatus, are engaged in taking.

A touching incident is the statuette of the Blessed Virgin in its little grated niche filled with bouquets and wreaths, which has escaped the flames. Of yore pious souls would have considered this, which is at least singular, due to a miracle, and such a belief is in no wise repugnant to my own views.

A number of the inhabitants were beginning to return to their homes, like ants returning to their ant-heap destroyed by a brutal foot. They were making their way through the accumulation of ruins, seeking the location of their former residences, clearing away the threshold and pushing open with difficulty the doors on which the Prussians had written, with a coal snatched from the conflagration of Saint-Cloud, "No Admission." Housekeepers were drawing water from a pillar-fountain half buried under a heap of rubbish, the overflow from which filtered down between

the stones. This feeble attempt at the resumption of life in the dead city was touching in its way. A little green herb of hope was already sprouting on the ruins left by the barbarians.

The sight of the destruction wrought there impresses one with the conviction that it was coolly and methodically carried out. Brigades of incendiaries must have set fire to one house after another with petroleum and torches. A few, four or five at most, are untouched, and on the shutters of one of these may be read, in German: —

THIS HOUSE IS NOT TO BE TOUCHED
UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

January 28, 1871
JACOBI, *Major General*

On the right and the left everything has been destroyed and burned down.

I was overcome with fatigue and grief, and I started in the direction of the boat by means of which I had to cross the Seine, the bridge having been destroyed. The "Tête-Noire" hotel, at the corner of the Place d'Armes, has been wrecked by shells, and it will be long before boating parties land at it for their jolly meals.

SAINT-CLOUD

On reaching the other bank, I looked round: Saint-Cloud, with its roofless houses and its ruins of a death-like whiteness, resembled a vast cemetery over which rose a funereal chapel; the church, which alone was spared, was watching over the cadaver of the city.

XVIII

THE MODERN BARBARIANS

MAY, 1871.

DURING the second siege of Paris the Place d'Armes at Versailles had a grim and startling aspect: military life had taken up its abode in the midst of civil life, and the white cones of the tents stood out bright against the dark background of the houses bordering upon that vast space, so empty in ordinary times, and apparently incapable of ever being filled up. Bluish smoke rose from the improvised fires made between a couple of bricks, on which the soldiers were cooking in the open air, resorting to the primitive methods which man need no longer make use of in our advanced stage of civilisation. Under the trees of the Avenue de Saint-Cloud were lines of horses, having no shelter other than the foliage, and shivering in the morning air like mustangs on the American prairies. Their masters were sleeping near them on a little straw, wrapped up in their cloaks or their blankets, springing

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The Versailles of Louis the Fourteenth

up at the first call of the reveille, and testifying to the fact that, in truth, well closed rooms and soft mattresses are quite needless things.

In the centre of the square had been formed a park of artillery, from and to which guns of every calibre were constantly going and coming: heavy siege-guns, light field-guns, squat howitzers, mitrailleuses of different patterns, weapons of offence or defence, rifled or smooth-bored, with their caissons drawn up in long lines, — a swart army of bronze eager to belch forth fire and flames. Above this monstrous pack of the dogs of war, their necks bent forward like those of mastiffs dragging at the leash, rose mighty cranes, a maze of beams recalling the catapults of antiquity, destined to lift up the huge naval guns and to shift them from one carriage to another. The uniformity of the lines was broken by a few cannon pointed against the heavens apparently, just as in a drove of cattle one sees an impatient ox draw itself up and overtop its companions with its head and chest. Strange indeed was the sight of that formidable accumulation of artillery in the centre of a city so peacefully disposed, and which seems to delight in silence, quiet, and solitude, as though it were listening to catch the

faint murmur of its remembrances of by-gone days. Yet the sight had a grim beauty of its own, and every time I went along the Place on my way to the Rue des Réservoirs to learn the news at the entrance to the Cour de Maroc, it compelled me to stay my steps.

I was especially struck by the return to the antique forms of life in the midst of a highly developed civilisation. War is one of the modes of life of primitive existence; during a campaign a soldier lives very much as do savages and barbarians. I do not mean to imply any reproach in the use of these words; I mean merely that man, in war time, goes back to something like the state of nature. A soldier has to cut and split wood for himself, to pitch his own tent, and to supply his own needs, trusting wholly to his own powers. He has to watch over his own safety, to stand on sentry, to peer into the darkness, to note the least motion of the blades of grass, just like a Red Indian in the woods. He has to make long marches, in silence; to attack, to defend himself, and very often, when his officers cannot transmit orders to him, he has to devise means of safety for himself. This is exactly the way men lived for many centuries, and it took many slow

improvements to bring about the complex condition of comfort we enjoy at the present day, unconsciously and almost without heeding it.

After a successful skirmish the guns taken from the enemy were brought to the Place d'Armes; the captured guns came along decked out like trophies, covered with lilac and may — it was then the early part of the month of May — and drawn by horses adorned with flowers under their ears. The soldiers of the artillery train, who drove them with a look of pride and high bearing, carried flowering branches by way of palms. The crowd hurried up and escorted them, uttering acclamations; it all looked like an antique triumph, and recalled to me the paintings by Giulio Romano and the cartoons by Andrea Mantegna in the palace at Hampton Court. It may be urged that guns did not exist in those days, although Milton has introduced them in the battle between the good and the bad angels, which occurred a great deal earlier, but it is quite certain that the scene was anything but modern. The expression of the faces, the attitudes of the bodies, the vigour of the horses, who resemble the horses in the historical paintings of the great masters, the mingling of weapons and foliage, remove one abruptly from the

ordinary class of spectacles and make one think of pictures of another age.

This truth was demonstrated to me, one day, in the plainest manner, by a most singular scene. I seemed to behold on the Place d'Armes of Versailles, but enlarged to life size, one of those wonderful drawings in which Decamps, in his search after the antique style, represented episodes of barbarian life; pitched camps, attacks, routs, processions of captives, migrations, carrying away of plunder, driving of herds of stolen cattle, and other similar subjects which he was led to undertake by the success of his "Battle of the Cymri."

It was a band of prisoners halted on their way to Satory under escort. It was hot enough that day to make even a cicala perspire; there was not a breath of air, not a cloud in the sky; the sun poured down molten lead upon the earth. The poor wretches, brought on foot from the gates of Paris, by cavalrymen who unconsciously compelled them to hurry on, worn out by fighting, a prey to dreadful anxiety, breathless, dripping with perspiration, had been unable to go a step farther, and it had been found necessary to allow them a few moments for rest. They were about one

hundred and fifty or two hundred in number, and they were obliged to squat or lie on the ground, like a herd of oxen stopped by their drivers at the entrance to a town. Around them stood their guards in a circle, as much overcome by the heat as the prisoners, scarce able to sit their motionless steeds and leaning their chests upon the pommels of their saddles. The loaded pistols were evidently heavy to their hands, and they were plainly struggling with sleep. It was impossible to tell the colour of their uniforms, so thick was the dust on them, and only the long lances, with their sharp spear-heads and no pennon, resting against their legs, enabled one to tell what arm they belonged to. Everything individual about them had vanished; they were no longer soldiers; they were the abstract warrior, the warrior of every age and every clime, Roman or Cymri, Greek or Mede, and they might have figured without fear of anachronism in the battles of Alexander or Cæsar just as they stood. Their horses, with their simple harness, wet with sweat, white with lather, had no modern peculiarity, and presented merely a character of antique generality.

I gazed upon these splendid horsemen, regretting that there was no painter of genius to note with swift

stroke the handsome lines, naturally and artlessly heroic, and also to sketch the no less interesting types of captives, turned into barbaric prisoners, Dacians, Getæ, Heruli, Abari, such as are seen on the *bassi-relievi* of triumphal arches and the spirals of columns of Trajan. They had no special dress indicative of a nationality or an epoch; their trousers, blouses, or shirts, rumpled, torn, tattered, clinging to the bodies with perspiration, merely concealed their nudity, but did not clothe them, and had preserved no special form of garment; and in such a condition, blouses, smock-frocks, cloaks, and tunics are all very much alike, while breeches are, in the sculptures of antiquity, the distinctive mark of barbarians. Several of them had wrapped their heads in cloth, by way of protection from the sun, for prisoners are deprived of their hats or caps, in order that they may be the more easily recognised in the crowd if they should attempt to escape. Others had bound their wounded feet with rags tied with string, and they looked so like Philoctetus in his island that they would have made a sculptor think of him; their little bits of rags connected them with Greek art. All these tatters, under the brilliant light, appeared discoloured like the draperies in a grisaille painting, and even the hair of

the prisoners, old and young, was of a uniform gray, so completely was the original shade concealed by the dust.

Among the prisoners were a few women, squatting on their haunches, after the manner of Egyptian figures in the judgment of the dead, and clothed in earth-stained rags that, however, formed superb folds. Some of them, grimly sitting apart from the group as if they contemned it, had the look of Michael Angelo's sybils, but I must own that the greater number looked like strygæ, lamiæ, and empusæ, or, leaving aside the mythology used in the second part of "Faust," like the bearded witches of Shakespeare, forming a hideous variety of hermaphrodites, the combination of the ugliness of both sexes. Strange to say, among these monsters was a lovely little maid of thirteen to fourteen, with a candid virgin face, fair, dressed with scrupulous neatness and cleanliness in a light blue jacket with black braiding, and a white skirt, short like the skirts of very young girls, and allowing to be seen stockings well drawn up, and elegant, though dust-covered shoes. By what chance was that little angel among these demons, that pure flower among these mandragoras? I could not find out; no one knew, and my query remained unanswered.

Somewhat in the rear, on a waggon or a *prolonge*, lay on his back, stiff as a corpse, an old man with a long white beard, whose bald head shone in the sun like a helmet. Although he was motionless and had the angular lines of a statue outstretched upon a tomb, he was not dead, and in his eyes, that blinked in the blinding light, gleamed a sombre glance of irreconcilable hate and powerless rage. Terrifying indeed was this Nestor of revolt, this patriarch of the insurrection, at once foul and venerable, and who seemed to be a representation of the Almighty on the barricades.

These wretched beings, made athirst by alcohol, fighting, the long march, the intense heat, the fever induced by a situation of the most critical and the terror of approaching death — for many of them believed they would be summarily shot at the end of the journey — were devoured by burning, inextinguishable thirst. They panted and breathed short like hunting-dogs, and cried in a hoarse, harsh voice, unsoftened by saliva, "Water! water! water!" They licked their cracked lips with their dry tongues, chewed the dust between their teeth, and compelled their arid throats to violent and vain acts of deglutition. They were un-

questionably atrocious rascals, murderers, incendiaries, by no means interesting, but even animals in such a condition would have moved to pity. So kindly souls began bringing along a few pails of water. Then the whole band cast itself pell-mell upon them, pushing, shoving, throwing one another down, dragging themselves on all fours, plunging their heads into the buckets, drinking long draughts, careless of the blows raining down upon them, their gestures those of brute beasts, in which it would have been hard indeed to see any trace of human attitudes. Those who, either because they were too weak or less agile, could not reach the pails placed on the ground, held out their hands suppliantly, with little ways like those of sick children who want sweetmeats. They uttered soft and pleading moans, and bent their arms like those of monkeys, bending them at the wrists with bestial and savage poses. A huge ruffian, a sort of Vitellius of the grog-shop, whose torn smock-frock revealed the muscular chest, reddened by habitual libations, indulged in the most moving pantomime in order to obtain a drop of the precious beverage. He looked like a Roman Cæsar being dragged to the gemoniæ by the mob. A poor horse, maddened by thirst, charged towards the buckets, right

through the crowd and added to the disorder. At last, thanks to the pitying women, glasses, goblets, cups, and bowls were brought up from all sides, and the poor devils were at least able to slake their thirst like men instead of lapping up the water like brutes.

As I watched the sight, I might just as well have fancied myself on the field of battle at Pharsalus as on the Place d'Armes at Versailles, in front of the palace of the Great King.

XIX

THE STEPS OF ROSE MARBLE

MAY, 1871.

IT often happens that an operatic motive, a refrain on a grinding organ, a phrase in a song heard by chance, unconsciously sticks in one's mind. At the very moment one might be thinking of something else, but one of the fibres of the brain, unwatched by the will, has seized upon the theme and clings obstinately to it. A breath whispers it in the ear, and the obsession of it speedily becomes unbearable. At times it is words instead of music — though this is not so frequent — but it did so happen to me the other day in the most unexpected fashion.

As I was walking from the Court of Morocco to the Hôtel des Réservoirs, down that sloping Boulevard des Italiens where meets the "tout Paris" of Versailles, taking in the news, discussing the events, there was suddenly opened in the cabinet of my memory a drawer that had remained closed for a long time, and from it

rolled out, like unto the pearls of a necklace of which the cord has broken, these six words, "On Three Steps of Rose Marble." As every one is aware, that is the title of a poem of Alfred de Musset's. These words at once seized upon me, and fluttered upon my lips like a monotonous refrain that wearied yet charmed me. None the less I was unable to drive them away or to take my mind from them.

A friend would say to me, "The Neuilly bridge barricade has been stormed by our troops," and I would inwardly return, "On Three Steps of Rose Marble." Even at night, in my sleep, disconnected dreams whispered the words mockingly, as if to prevent my forgetting them while I slumbered. When I woke, the six words were outlined in the light of dawn upon the wall, and I began once more to repeat my unforgettable litany. This title, with its strangeness, its harmony, and its colour is, to every poet, a charm, in the original meaning of the word, and acts upon him like a spell. The effect, however, ought to be transitory and to die away with the vibration of the sonorous syllables, instead of being repeated in endless recurrence like the Simonetta echo. This was not the case with me, and the murmur was ever renewed.

The curious thing is that I could not remember a single line of that lovely poem, which I know by heart; both the thoughts and the rimes escaped me. I could dimly feel that they were there, as behind a black gauze, but it was out of my power to tear the veil asunder: the title alone flamed before me, and I spelt it out mechanically, repeating the line, will he nill he, "On Three Steps of Rose Marble."

How came that line to awaken in me, seeing that the thought it contained was so utterly unconnected with the existing situation of things? In the case of musical obsession, the haunting phrase has been expressed by an orchestra, an instrument, or a voice. The point of departure of the "possession" is known — it is downright possession — but there was nothing analogous in this. No one had spoken the magic words in my vicinity; I had not seen them in print or writing; I had not chanced across an odd volume of Musset on my table, after carrying it about in the peregrinations and exodus of the campaign. Perhaps by some occult "correspondence," to make use of Swedenborg's mystic expression, "The Three Steps of Rose Marble" had, unconsciously, so far as I was concerned, put themselves *en rapport* with me. The

three steps are in the park at Versailles and the neighbourhood increased their power of influencing me. Then I am fond or rather madly fond of marble, the noble material that knows how to preserve form, the sparkling flesh of heroes and deities, even when it is merely a block in which slumbers a possible masterpiece, and therefore there must exist secret affinities between us.

The charming poet, now dead, who sent me such lovely stanzas from the other world, about "Spirite," having at present no medium at hand, was doubtless taking this way of recalling by a gentle vibration, the remembrance of himself in my memory, and was sending me an imperceptible bit of rose-coloured marble. While he lived, he was always preoccupied by the whiteness of Paros, to the great disgust of utilitarians, and shared my love for marble. In that common sentiment, and not far from the steps on which he had fixed his dreamy glance, our minds, though dwelling in different spheres, may have met, and the words that summed up both the poem and the poet had sprung forth like a call that was repeated with fateful persistency until I had understood the desire of the soul hovering near me.

For a few days, eager for news, snatching the papers from the sellers, and altogether taken up with the mighty drama in which the fate of France is at stake, I endeavoured, but in vain, to drive away the inward refrain that was as troublesome as the buzzing of an obstinate insect's wings. At last I felt that the spirit called upon me to perform a pious pilgrimage, and, as it were, to pour out a libation of remembrance upon the marble on which his glance had dwelt, which had been penetrated by his thought and warmed by his love that beheld in the snowy material, veined with azure and rose, a hunting Diana's virginal bosom. It was plain that a grain of incense had to be burned upon that altar in honour of pure beauty.

I forthwith started on my excursion, and as various official orders barred the shortest way, I took the longest without much regret. Poets are never in a hurry to reach their destination, for the incidents on the road entertain them and make them forget where they are going.

Scarcely had I passed through the gates when I found myself in deepest solitude: solemn calm succeeded passing bustle; it was leaving the present to re-enter the past, and all sounds died away at the threshold of the majestic and peaceful gardens.

Very beautiful and noble in design is the round open space surrounded with trees in the centre of which is the Basin of Neptune. The whole architecture of the fountains is old, and dates from the time of Louis XIV; it was decorated under Louis XV by Bouchardon and Lemoyne. Never has flamboyant rococo twisted shapes, rumpled folds, and curved scrolls in bolder or more lightsome fashion. Neptune, in the midst of his court of Nereids and sea monsters, brandishes his trident with furious gesture. A little farther, arranged as pendants, Tritons are mastering sea horses, and on the sides of the horse-shoe little genii, eight feet high, like the children on the font in Saint Peter's at Rome, are teasing fantastic orcs, with claws on their fins. The whole thing looks like an operatic setting of that day carried out in reality. In spite of the depravation of taste, there is a pompous and grandiose facility about the composition that is very effective. The dull colour of the groups, cast in lead, harmonises happily with the gray tones of the vermiculated stone-work fringed with stalactites, while the streaming waters impart to them, on fête days, the shimmer and lustre they lack when the fountains are not playing.

The recurrence of the refrain warned me that I was dallying too long, and I continued on my way. At the end of the walks that open fan-wise around the Basin, in the direction of Trianon, there floated, as in the vaporous blue vistas in the parks in Watteau's paintings, faint smoke, the mistiness of which prolonged the aerial perspective. Spring, like unto a timid landscape painter who puts in his leafage with little touches, was putting on the branches, with a sober and insufficiently filled brush, a few touches of tender green. It was the time when the trees are full of sap and are most elegant. Their delicate and light ramifications have not yet disappeared under the thick foliage, yet they are no longer clad in winter's sombre livery.

On the edge of the Basin of Ceres, its waters made opalescent by quantities of soapsuds, soldiers were engaged in washing their linen and in hanging it to dry on the sides of the bowers. What would the shade of the Great King have said, that is, supposing it still haunts the garden wherein he strolled with la Vallière, Fontange and Montespan? No doubt it would have assumed a disdainfully supercilious air, though, from the point of view of the purely picturesque, the red tint of the trousers warmed up the somewhat cold green of

the landscape as do the red spots with which Decamps, the colourist, was wont to diaper his stretches of sward.

As I kept on ascending towards the terrace upon which the palace displays its fine lines, I looked in, through the interstices, slightly festooned with leaves, of the trellis-work, destroyed partly by time and largely by man, at the reserved portion of the park called the Baths of Apollo, and between the trunks of the trees I made out the artificial rocks down which fall the waters of the cascade on the days of the *grandes eaux* or display of the waterworks.

It has acquired, thanks to being left alone, to solitude and to climbing plants, a natural air that is partly contradicted, it must be owned, by the marble groups placed in niches chiselled out of the rock. Yet this reminiscence of art is not unpleasing in the midst of this ordered nature. Under the vaulting supported by heavy pillars roughly blocked out, the Sun-King, the young Versailles Apollo, having performed his luminous journey and coming to rest in the bosom of Thetis, stands out from the dark background. Around him press the Nereids: one, kneeling down, is unlacing his cothurns; another presents a ewer filled with perfume; a third removes a portion of his garments, and if the fourth is not

holding the shirt out to him, it is simply because the Greek gods did not sport that particular vestment. This mythological *petit coucher* of the King is very gallant, and Girardon has imparted to it a thoroughly French grace. The two grottoes where Tritons are stabling the horses of the sun, form fit pendants for the central one, and the effect of the three white spots on the dark rock is quite happy.

The sky that day was a mingled blue and white, and the light poured down with charming changes of shine and shadow, while sun-spangles sparkled here and there through the thickets and tipped the blades of grass. The birds were singing, and nature's imperturbable serenity was undisturbed by the occasional distant cannon-shots; the eternal functions were going on silently. Meanwhile I was sunk in dreamy, forgetful contemplation, when suddenly the line, "On Three Steps of Rose Marble," which I had not heard for some time, began to whisper softly in my inward ear in a tone of friendly upbraiding.

Forsaking the Grotto of Apollo, I proceeded along the row of yew trees trimmed to the shape of globes, pyramids, and other quaint forms, casting but a superficial glance at the "Four Seasons" and the "Four

Quarters of the Globe," slackening my pace in front of the lovely "Diana the Huntress," that stands by the corner of the Basin of the Lions, and thus I reached the main terrace.

The nearer I approached, the more my memory came back to me, and methought I heard the poet's voice saying to me, in its well-known timbre and with its careless grace: —

"Do you remember, O my friend, The steps of marble rose? As one to the great pond goes, Where the Orangery doth lie, To the left from the palace doors."

I was on the right road. The replica of the antique Cleopatra, of which there is a copy in bronze in the Tuileries, was still slumbering in the same place, one arm bent above the head, in the tranquil, graceful pose that makes death look like sleep, and along the balustrade of the terrace were ranged, as of yore, the charming bronze vases that are so diverse in their apparent symmetry, with their handles formed of chimeras, satyrs, and little winged genii. The steps were not far off; they are close to a white vase, very neatly carved and most tasteful, which to de Musset had the advantage of not being Gothic. It has indeed a fine

outline, and its sides swell out like the cup of some great lily. Under its shadow lie the famous three steps sung by the poet, with their hue of faded rose, their azure transparency, and cut out of marble so fresh, so living, so similar to flesh, that one dares scarcely tread upon them lest one should trample upon a goddess's bosom. Then is felt the full truth of the image evoked by the poet addressing the block of marble, that ought to have been placed on the pediment of some Greek temple: —

"When into thee their saw did cut, These stone-cutters did grievous wound A Venus yet in slumber sunk, And the crimson o'er thee flushing Is the blood that she did shed."

I remained there for a time as on a sacred spot where the pilgrim offers up his prayers, and peace came back into my soul; the forgotten feeling for art again took possession of me, and poetic thoughts fluttered around me, beating their wings like flocks of doves. I thought of ideal form, of divine rhythm, of immortal beauty, of the nymphs and virgins of Greece that ran barefoot in the dew, their locks wreathed with smilax and violets, of all those fair imaginings that cast a golden veil upon life's nakedness.

No doubt this was the lesson the poet who has vanished into eternal serenity intended to teach to the poet who has been left amid the tumults of earth, for since that day I have been freed from the obsession to which I had been a prey. Now I can abstract my thoughts, I can write, without hearing the still, small voice whispering low to me, "On three Steps of Marble flushed with rose."

XX

THE VERSAILLES OF LOUIS THE FOURTEENTH

MAY, 1871.

I

ON debouching into the Place d'Armes at Versailles from one of the avenues of centenarian trees that lead to it, the palace appears in front in all its former magnificence. At once the visitor feels himself transported into another sphere; for it is all so vast, grand, solemn, majestically regular that modern life is fairly intimidated and respectfully lowers its voice.

The general aspect has been preserved, and were the Great King to return to earth, he might suppose, at the first glance, that nothing has been altered in his Olympic abode. But a closer examination would speedily undeceive him.

For the sake of the numerous guests whom Versailles shelters nowadays, and who do not succeed in

crowding its broad avenues, it might prove interesting to restore the palace as it originally was, and to reproduce the façade as it was seen by the courtiers coming from Paris towards the year 1710. Architects often carry out, for the sake of practice, such restorations of buildings in a greater or less state of ruin, and occasionally of monuments that have wholly disappeared. But in this case there is no need of any such effort of the imagination; the building exists, and the story of the changes it has undergone is known; these changes, besides, have not materially altered its appearance. It appears to be an irresistible tendency among generations that settle down in a building characteristic of a given epoch, to remodel it in accordance with their own taste and to leave upon it their own often regrettable mark.

Let us begin with the iron railing that separates the Place d'Armes from the palace court; it has remained such as it was formerly, with its two stone groups flanking the gates, and representing the "Triumph of France over the Empire," and the "Triumph of France over Spain." In the days of Louis XIV, however, a second railing divided this vast space into two courts. It started from the corner of the pavilions in front, on

which to-day are inscribed the words, "To All the Glories of France," and curved through the axis of the modern statue of the Great King, the figure being by Petitot and the horse by Cartellier. Both the King and his steed are in a hideous troubadour style, and make one bitterly regret the monumental railing, richly gilded and adorned with two beautiful groups by Coysevox and Tuby, which have been shifted to the back corners of the terrace, where the court ends on the Place d'Armes side, a spot where nobody ever sees them.

That was a much better arrangement than the one which has replaced it. There were two other railings, the fastenings of which may still be made out, and which passed through the intercolumniations of the pavilions; these closed in the Princes' Court and the Chapel Court which are situated one on each side of the Marble Court. So the palace, properly so called, was thus completely closed in and circumscribed within its own bounds.

On either side of the Court of Honour, that formerly served as vestibule to the Royal Court, itself leading to the Marble Court, rose and still stand nowadays large brick and stone buildings called the Minis-

ters' Wing, in which were situated the offices. The ground, terraced in a way to diminish and modify the slope of the court, allows of their substructures retaining horizontal lines. It is on the balustrade that borders this slope that, in the reign of Louis-Philippe, were placed on high pedestals, on the right and on the left — for the terracing extends on both sides — the twelve colossal statues that used to crush the Pont de la Concorde with their weight. Four Marshals of the Empire have been added to them. These colossi, coldly, staringly white, should be returned to the Île des Cygnes, and stored in the marble warehouse there, unless it were thought better to forward each of the illustrious personages they represent each to his native town. They would look better standing alone in the centre of a square.

The two pavilions that rise at the entrance of the Royal Court were formerly of a different shape. They were topped by an elegant roof, lighted by round and by dormer-windows, adorned with statues and surmounted with a small lantern, the roof's harmonious curve combining marvellously well with the buildings at right angles to them. The façades had six pillars forming porticoes. Under Louis XV the pavilion

nearest the Chapel was rebuilt by Gabriel, the architect of the Garde-Meuble and the Ministry of Marine, a man of great talent, but whose ideas differed from those that ruled taste in the reign of Louis XIV.

He should not be blamed for having disregarded the style of architecture of the palace to which were to be added the new buildings he was called upon to carry out, since the order was given him precisely because the then existing buildings were considered to be in bad taste. The archaic feeling so greatly developed among us and which insists that renovations and restorations shall be scrupulously in accordance with the original style of the building, did not then exist. Architects did not hesitate to plaster a Classical façade upon the nave of a Gothic church, and artists calmly erected Pompadour monuments in Notre-Dame and put Roman arches under ogees with the utmost serenity. Buildings that had lasted long thus bore the mark of the ages they had traversed, with their particular forms of taste, of art, of manners, of improvements, and of degenerescence. It is true that the general characteristics of the building were consequently modified to a certain extent, but the building remained more living, more interesting, more historical, as it were. Every

age has done the same, and it is but rarely that the plan drawn by the first architect of a palace or a church has been carried out in its integrity. It is only when criticism flourishes, when art becomes curious, that its refinement is considered.

In itself Gabriel's pavilion is exceedingly fine and noble, with its Greek pediment, its tetrastyle portico with its Corinthian order, and its rusticated, channelled substructure, yet my antiquarian feeling, unknown to the people who lived nearer the golden age of France than we do, makes me feel that it would be more pleasing in some other place. I have no doubt that this pavilion was very generally preferred to the old one.

The pavilion on the left was not built until long afterwards, under Louis XVIII, by Dufour the architect, and was most probably erected in order to satisfy the requirements of symmetry, for the building is not carried out on the court side as in Gabriel's design.

What could have been the motives that led to the tearing down, in the days of Louis XV, of buildings which must have been quite solid then and whose aspect, judging by the engravings of the day, was both pompous and rich? Apart from the love of change

and the conviction that the men of that day could improve on the work of their predecessors, a conviction shared by each successive generation, it may be supposed that the brick and stone which had been sufficient for Henry IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV, appeared then to be materials too rustic to be worthy of being employed on a royal palace. It may be also, that the mingling of red and white, the ruddy tone of the façades, struck eyes accustomed to the white flecking of hair-powder and the bluish bloom of pastels as too robustly country-like.

As for the rose-and-white turret that rises on the roof, in the left corner of the Royal Court it may be knocked away in imagination, for, in the days of the Sun-King, it did not spoil the lines of the perspective with its unwelcome projection, seeing that it was built by Louis-Philippe in order to meet certain wants of easier internal communication.

The Marble Court, which is at the end of the buildings at right angles to the façade, was raised by five steps above the level of the court in front; this is now changed, and there is but one step left, the level of the ground having been lowered under Louis-Philippe.

No one, not even the King himself, could cross the

black and white paving of the Marble Court save on foot, as Monicart tells us in his "Versailles Immortalised": —

"His private staircase opening upon his passage, He crosses me on foot, for my paving By coach or horse's hoofs never has been damaged: These five steps, lower down, forbid their approach And prevent my black and white stone being touched."

Hence the King, in order to enter his carriage, was compelled himself to walk a few steps on his red-heeled shoes. Louis XV used to come out by a portico, the pillars of which have been removed, at the corner of the Royal Court, and there it was that Damiens stabbed, or scratched him, rather.

The façade of the palace at the back of the Marble Court is exactly as it was in the time of Louis XIV, with its roof with round and mansard windows, its lead bouquets, its open-work acroter, its dial on which the hours stand out in gold upon a ground of royal blue enamel, its pediment, on which show in high relief Girardon's "Hercules" and Marsy's "Mars," — the latter artist possibly having owed to the punning resemblance of the two names the order to carve the god that, like Hercules, symbolises the invincible King, —

its groups of pillars supporting a balcony and separating three archways, its red walls upon which busts, placed upon brackets, are set in oblong white panels. Nothing has been changed.

Of course in the other buildings a few things here and there have been altered, suppressed, or replaced; a bust is wanting in one place, a statue has gone from another; it fell and it has not been replaced; vases, too, have vanished, but these are not matters of any importance, and it would take too long to note all these minor ravages and embellishments.

If the original silhouette of the palace were to be restored, it would be necessary to replace upon the ridge of the chapel roof the gilded lantern, ending in a point, like that on the dome of the Invalides. I do not know why it was removed. It harmonised with the small cupolas of the pavilions that were torn down, and which surmounted the dials that have disappeared and been replaced by Gabriel's pediments.

I am not now writing a monograph of the palace of Versailles, but merely a sketch in which I point out briefly the main differences between its former and its present condition. Let me, however, note a few more points. The visitor has no doubt remarked, on trav-

ersing the Court of Honour, four lines of paving-stones running from the entrance gates to the gates in the second balustrade, by which the Royal Court was entered, on the spot where now stands the modern equestrian statue of Louis XIV. These lines are still perfectly plain, and it was on them that were dressed, when drawn up when the King went by, the Swiss Guards on the right and the French Guards on the left. The guard-rooms were situated in the substructure of the terracing that bounds the court on the Place d'Armes side.

Does my reader desire to people the palace again and to renew in it its former animation? It is the easiest thing in the world. I shall simply transcribe the old engraving which I am using for reference and for guide, and which is as crowded with figures as Della Bella's engraving of the Pont-Neuf.

The Swiss and the French Guards are at their posts, for the King has just returned, and his coach and eight, escorted by the musketeers and outriders, is driving into the Royal Court; two other coaches and six, belonging to princes of the blood or great noblemen, making way for it. Other coaches, with an equal number of horses, are ascending or descending the slope of the Court of

Honour, across which drive more rapidly two-horse carriages that correspond to our modern coupés. A multitude of figures, soldiers, courtiers, petitioners, ladies with high coifs, singly or in groups, dot the vast space. A goodly number of them are going in the direction of the ministers' wing. So far it is not difficult to reconstitute the appearance of things; only the costumes are different; the crowd is the same. There are also seen riders in the palace employ going off to bear orders or messages. If one will indulge in a little imagination, the present can be forgotten and life breaks out again, full and splendid, in the great resuscitated palace still gilded by the distant beams of the sun of Louis the Fourteenth. *Nec pluribus impar.*

II

THE FOUNTAINS WALK, THE TRIUMPHAL ARCH, THE THREE FOUNTAINS

THE park is entered from the palace by passing under one of the three archways that open on the left, at the end of the Princes' Court, and on the right at the end of the Chapel Court. They were not glazed formerly, and used to frame in broad views of verdure and sky.

After proceeding a short distance on the great terrace and turning round, the façade of the palace shows in its fullest extent and magnificence such as it existed in the days of Louis XIV. Contrary to what happens in our rainy climate, it has not been blackened by time and the white stone has been only faintly toned a golden gray that is most pleasant to the eye. The façade lacks merely the trophies and vases which, placed upon the acroters of the balustrades at the top, broke effectively the immense horizontal line of the building, a line that is too bare at present, and varied its monotony by skilfully calculated intersequences. The glazed sashes, introduced under Louis-Philippe for the purpose of lighting the rooms of the Museum, are far from producing the same effect.

It is not my intention, in the course of my wanderings through the park, to describe what now exists, but rather that which has disappeared or been changed, and to restore things to the condition in which they were seen by the Great King. Let us, then, descend the steps, the upper part of which is guarded by the "Knife-grinder" and the "Crouching Venus" of Coysevox, which bears the date 1686 — a modern masterpiece after an antique one — and follow the Fountains Walk, com-

monly called the Allée des Marmousets. It is composed of children and little genii in groups of three, supporting basins, and arranged in two rows down the fairly steep sloping lawn, so as to show one above another as one looks up the walk.

Formerly these figures of children, which are in bronze, the patina being superb, bore basins that were alternately square and round, from which the water splashed into a lower basin of the same shape as the upper, and made, like it out of a single block of marble. The upper basins were filled with fruits and flowers modelled in lead, coloured in natural colours, and covered with a silver glaze by the streaming water. The children held in their hands various attributes significant of their attitudes. All this was done away with later, and all the square basins were replaced by round ones for the sake of symmetry. The traces of this arrangement may still be deduced from the shape of the plinths, and it was unquestionably more varied and more picturesque. The suppression of the coloured fruits is indicative of the beginning of the tendency to deaden tones which led to the substitution of Gabriel's façades for the red ones of Louis XIV.

At the foot of the Allée d'Eau lies the Basin of the

Dragon, but it is not in its present state that it was known to Louis XIV when he strolled through his park, perched on his high heels, leaning on his tall stick, and walking like a bantam pigeon; for he was a great pedestrian before the Lord, was Louis XIV. Instead of the bits of piping that prosaically emerge from the centre of the basin, a dragon, which gave its name to the fountain, writhed amid a host of swans bestridden by Cupids, a combination that produced a most attractive interlacing of jets of water flashing like arrows.

Nor did the Basin of Neptune then possess its group of the god of Ocean brandishing his trident, the Tritons and the children taming marine monsters. This is the work of Bouchardon, Lemoyne, and Adam, and was added under Louis XV. The vast stone basin, with its border of rustic bossing and madreporæ, and its line of leaden vases, alone existed then.

By the Allée d'Eau, on the right as one comes from the palace, there is a green bosquet, closed in by trellis-work and hedges, which is full of trees whose foliage is denser and wilder than that of the other trees in the park. If one has the key of the gate nearest to the Basin of the Dragon, and enters thereby, one is sur-

prised to find one's self, after going a few paces, in deep solitude, in a virgin forest, as it were. The trees have for many years been allowed to grow as they pleased, and they are none the less beautiful on this account, ivy-mantled as they are, their boles emerging from the tall grass, their branches interlacing, and their tops mingling in a wildering disorder that would disgust Le Nôtre and delights landscape painters. Yet it is speedily seen that they have not been planted at haphazard in this place. Their trunks, like pillars in a ruined hall, enclose an empty, sloping space, dug up here and there in regular fashion in accordance with a plan the traces of which can be made out under the maze of wild plants and parasitical vegetation. For here it was that, in the days of the original Versailles, rose the Triumphal Arch, or the triumphal reservoir rather, which was so greatly admired by contemporaries. The only trace of it left nowadays is the upheaval of the ground caused by the removal of the materials that composed it, and which has long since been overgrown with grass.

Yet if one turns towards the clump of trees on entering, there is to be seen in a state of complete ruin, a magnificent group on which Nature has worked in her

own way, applying here ornaments of dark mosses, sowing elsewhere a yellow floweret, and in another spot turning to account the disjointing of two stones to insert into it a bunch of hart's-tongue.

The group represents " France Triumphant " seated on a car supported upon a platform denticulated like the edge of a *buffet* fountain ; for the group is a fountain also. The figure of France, in bronze that was formerly gilded, wears the helmet and bears the shield and the scales, while it is nobly draped in a royal mantle. The sun in his glory, the emblem of the King, shines in the centre of the shield, just where the lilies, struck off, no doubt, at the time of the Revolution, formerly were, as may be inferred from darker spots. The lance has vanished, but the pose of the hand and arm plainly shows that the figure was armed. Two captives, the one young, the other of mature age, and accompanied, the former by a lion, the latter by an eagle, symbolise Spain and the Empire vanquished. By their side lie their helmets with their fantastic ornaments, from the crests of which water shot out, as it did from their bucklers that are provided with jets and that formed basins for themselves, their disks being overset. The lion and the eagle also darted water forth, and it

jutted from every projection on the car, which is adorned with masks and face. A dragon expiring on the lower plinth and representing the "Dissolution of the Triple Alliance," vomited water from its many mouths. The dragon is still there, but spouts no more —which is a subtle allegory. I had thought the worthy animal was placed there merely for the purpose of casting quantities of spray into the basin, or, at most, for the purpose of playing the part of the Hydra of Anarchy, and I own that unless I had been told, I should never have guessed that it stands for the "Dissolution of the Triple Alliance."

The figure representing the Empire has suffered from a curious accident; the ground having given way under the weight of the monument has caused a change in the thrust of the group, which has borne upon the captive's leg and has bent it like an invalid's leg. The crippled statue has a curious appearance, but it is not surprising that it should have given way, since it is of lead.

This handsome group, constructed as a fountain and facing formerly the Triumphal Arch since removed, has a splendid decorative appearance. It would be easy to restore it; it was the work of Coysevox, Prou, and

Tuby, the latter of whom was familiarly called Baptiste in his day.

On turning away from the group of "France Triumphant," the Triumphal Arch used to be seen. It occupied the upper part of the rough and uncultivated piece of ground I have described, standing out against a background of trees the lower part of which was masked by a trellis adapted to the shape of the monument. It was constructed entirely of iron and gilded bronze, forming a portico with three arches in which stood three basins from which rose jets of water. In the centre of the pediment, were placed the arms of France amid a rich ornamentation. On the sloping sides of the front, six shells were set one above another, three on one side, three on the other; from them bubbled a stream of water that fell along a volute on either side of the portico, into five shells that threw the water back to one another. The substructure of the Arch, which was of the Ionic order, was cut in the form of steps, down which the water flowed in miniature cascades, fringing each step and allowing the ornamentation to show through its transparence. Two jets springing from a twisted and ornamental bracket defined the outer lines of the Arch, and basins placed

upon square scabellums formed companion pieces on either hand and also sent forth streams of water, but to a less height. Four triangular-sided obelisks, borne by griffins and surmounted by a golden lily, and the openings in which formed a setting for the mirrors the waters made in them as it dripped away, rose by two *buffet* fountains placed opposite one another and overflowing one into another. Near these buffets were two basins corresponding symmetrically to those placed on either side of the Triumphal Arch. I need not describe the other two buffets placed lower down and bearing on marble tablets the name of the King in the centre of a wreath of golden leaves. All the waters finally flowed into the centre of the grove through two spouts that formed tiny waterfalls and that were ornamented with huge dolphin-heads with dishevelled beards.

Such was the Triumphal Arch which was destroyed when the park was replanted under Louis XVI. Around it wound the Dædalian walks of a small maze; but nothing is left, not even the remembrance of it, and in order to find the situation or the form of the vanished monuments, one has to study the old plans and to glance over old engrav-

ings. But it is the Versailles of the past that I am describing : —

"O suns below the horizon vanished !"

On the left of the Allée d'Eau, still as one goes down from the palace, and facing the Bosquet of the Triumphal Arch, is another grove, called the Bosquet of the Three Fountains, which is also, like the other, enclosed by trellised and palisaded hedges. It was famous formerly for the abundant flow of its upspringing waters, but these were suppressed, like those in the neighbouring grove, at the time of the replanting of the park under Louis XVI. The place, though it is not quite as uncared for as the Bosquet of the Triumphal Arch, which for a time was used as a garden by the Prefect, whose residence has now become the Hôtel des Réservoirs, is nevertheless in a very neglected condition and behind its protecting bowers is quietly going back to the wild state. The nightingales carol in it to the top of their bent, and the blackbirds walk about as if they felt quite at home. Very few people penetrate within the place, though it is difficult to see why it should be reserved, and the key, when one manages to get hold of it, turns with difficulty

in the old rusty lock, over which spiders spin their webs.

The only vestiges of the three fountains are a thicker growth than usual of nettles, like the fairy rings in grass, that still outline the plan of the turf border which ran round the lower basin. This basin, the first one came upon when entering by the gate, at the bottom, was hexagonal, and from it spurted eight great jets of water rising to a height of fifty feet, and eight smaller ones that formed a sheaf in the centre of the basin and described a quarter arc as they fell back. Farther on, upon a terrace reached by a slope between two cascades falling over steps, stretched a square basin with ten jets, the four larger in the corners, the remaining six in the centre, their crystal wave cris-crossing so as to form an arbour or pavilion. Finally, at the very top, on the highest level of the slope, was a circular basin from which sprang with incredible noise, impetuosity, and ascending force, in a mist of iridescent spray, one hundred and forty jets of water. These, with the jets in the other basins, made up a total of one hundred and eighty, producing so fairy-like an effect that the beholder might well have fancied himself standing in Alcina's gardens. It formed a regular fireworks of

water, its silver bouquet shining out against the background of sombre verdure.

For the times it was a comparatively simple affair, as only water, trees, and sward were used in its composition. There were but a few bits of rockery or marble used in making the steps of the cascades, and the Great King must have considered this *landscape* "very sylvan and most rustic." Its splendour consisted in the wealth of and flashing of the waters, which were the admiration of "the Court and the City," as people said then. Louis XIV, when taking his posthumous walks, must regret the lovely waters, so cool, so transparent, and so boldly upspringing. But alas! the Three Fountains are dried up for ever, and their name alone is preserved in the grove of which they were the ornament.

III

THE BATHS OF APOLLO, THE WATER THEATRE, THE DOMES

The Baths of Apollo still exist, and indeed the grove in which they stand is one of the most frequented in the gardens. There is nothing left, however, of the original arrangement, and the Great King himself

would find it difficult to recognise his creation, the groups of statuary alone having been left. I shall restore the early condition of things, since I have undertaken to describe more particularly all that has vanished of the Versailles of old.

The Baths of Apollo stood in a trellised space designed with recesses in which stood benches; great trees lifted their tops above the trellis, and low yew-trees, planted in front and trimmed to a point, completed the decoration. At the back of the space, on a pedestal from which water spouted out of three lions' heads, stood the famous group of "Apollo in the Home of Thetis," a transparent allusion to the King resting after the labours of the day. The lovely group is not, as is generally believed, the sole work of Girardon. That artist executed only the Apollo and the three nymphs placed in the forefront of the group. The three other nymphs in the background are by Regnaudin. The composition was surmounted and protected by a gilded bronze baldacchino, and the slenderness of the supports allowed the outline and details of the figures to be fully appreciated. The steeds of the Sun, their harness removed and being groomed by Tritons, were likewise protected by baldacchini, and

formed two groups placed symmetrically on either side of the central one. The horses on the right are by Guérin, and those on the left, which are far better, by Marsy.

The bosquet, therefore, had that solemn, regular, and splendid look which is characteristic of the style of that period. Art did not then seek to conceal itself behind nature; it showed itself openly, and boldly "affirmed" its existence, as we say in our nineteenth-century jargon. Men, in those days, were fond of those splendid compositions in which the human will left but a carefully circumscribed liberty to the chances and caprices of vegetation. Gardens were built just as much as planted, and the trees had to imitate architectural forms; the quickset hedges turned back at right angles like the leaves of a screen of verdure; the yews were clipped into the shape of pyramids or of balls; skilful trimming wrought vaulting out of the leafy masses, and what we now call the picturesque was most carefully avoided. This taste, or style, improperly called the French style, had come to us from Italy, where in the villas and vineyards of Popes and Roman princes were to be found examples of the mingling of terraces, buildings, statues, vases, green trees, and upspringing waters.

I myself, in the days of Romanticism, paraphrased more or less closely the ingenious contrast set forth by Victor Hugo in his preface to "Cromwell," between an American virgin forest and the gardens of Versailles, and, like my fellows, I made fun of the "little yews set out in rows like onions." But I was in the wrong, and the gardens were precisely those that suited this particular palace; there was a wondrous harmony in that ensemble of set forms among which the life of the day was able to develop freely its majestic and somewhat slow evolutions. The result is an impression of grandeur, of orderliness, and of beauty which no one can help feeling. Versailles remains without a peer in the world: it is the highest formula of a complete art and the expression, carried to its highest power, of a civilisation that had reached its fullest state of development.

When the gardens were replanted under Louis XVI, taste had changed. Rousseau, the Genevese citizen, had discovered nature; English ideas were invading the continent; "landscape gardens" had become the fashion, that is, gardens with rolling ground, unclipped clumps of trees, winding walks, green lawns, slow-flowing waters spanned by rustic bridges, imitation

grottoes, artificial ruins, and huts containing automata busied in country pursuits. By admiring these fine things one proved one's self "tender-hearted," the great object of the day, and naturally the notion was entertained of replanting the garden in the modern taste.

A good deal of fun was already being made of walks absolutely straight, of clipped hedges, of flower-beds with box-wood borders, laid out in patterns like tapestries. A mill churning soapy waters with its wheels, as are the mills in Watteau's landscapes, was considered at that time far finer than the handsomest piece of hydraulic architecture adorned with statues. The enormous expense the change entailed, the seriousness of the events that supervened, were no doubt the reason why the project was not carried out, though the new arrangement of the Baths of Apollo, the former style of which I have just described, is plainly a beginning of the work.

The transformation was carried out in accordance with the plans prepared by Hubert-Robert, the fashionable designer of the day, the painter of ruins, the Romanticist of the time, an artist endowed with a feeling for the decorative and the picturesque which is appre-

ciated even now, and whose paintings, whose clever sketches especially, are much sought after by amateurs. He conceived the notion of digging in a huge artificial mass of rock three grottoes, in one of which he placed the group of Apollo and the nymphs, and the other two of which were turned into stables for the steeds of the Sun being rubbed down by Tritons. The centre grotto is a roughly blocked-out rustic order cut in the mass of the rock, with an almost regular arched vaulting, which has the look of being a natural feature turned to account by art. Rock-plants were sown between the blocks of stone to imitate the wildering of plants left to grow as they please, and the water flowed out from between the cracks, rippling over the anfractuosities, forming little waterfalls, and tumbling, boiling, and foaming to the foot of the rock into a basin arranged to look like a lakelet.

The mass of artificial rock-work was surrounded with trees planted without plan, in order to simulate the wildness of thickets, and imparted to the grove a picturesque aspect entirely foreign to the decorative plan of the old gardens. But it must be confessed that this innovation, which was conformable to the literary tendencies of the day, proved a great success, and even

nowadays the Baths of Apollo are among the parts of the garden the most admired and the most resorted to. Nevertheless they are no more than a change in the serious and splendid Louis XIV taste, and the beginning of a decadence that was not again to be stayed. The English style displaced French taste, and the beauties of Versailles, the wonder of the universe, became purely historical: life had left them.

Not far from here, near the Three Fountains, within an enclosure of hedges and trellis, was formerly the Water Theatre, a design greatly admired in its day, but of which not a trace is left. The Water Theatre was destroyed under Louis XVI, when the gardens were replanted, — a fatal operation that caused to disappear many curiosities well worth regretting, and deprived the work of the Great King of part of its individuality. The Water Theatre was a large round space, one hundred and sixty-six feet in diameter, divided into two parts, the one, surrounded with turf steps, serving as an auditorium, and the other containing the stage properly so called. On the palisade formed by the footlights of this aquatic theatre, rose four rustic rocaille fountains, on which, on the left, groups of children, by Houzeau, were playing with a crayfish and a griffin, and

on the right, other children, the work of le Hongre, were teasing a swan and holding a lyre. These four groups were no doubt cast in lead; no one knows what has become of them, and the chances are they were thrown into the melting-pot.

From the curtain of carefully clipped trees that formed the back-drop of the theatre, radiated fanwise three walks that afforded prolonged vistas, and were made to resemble the wings of a scene, the trunks of the trees being hidden behind double quickset hedges. Three rows of jets of water rose in lines one above another on the steps of the small waterfalls that fell from the back of the avenues in the direction of the spectator. At the end of the avenues were small groups that can scarcely have been visible through the upspringing and spray of the waters. In the centre avenue was Jupiter bestriding an eagle that held the terrestrial globe in its talons; Legros was the sculptor. In the avenue on the right, Mars, youthful, holding a buckler and placed on a lion striking down a wolf; this group was by Desjardins. Finally, in the avenue on the left, Pluto, the god of riches, with Cerberus, the hell hound, for a steed. This was the work of Masson.

The theatre possessed six water stage-settings, the invention of Vigarani, who was expert in hydraulic marvels, then exciting, on account of their novelty, almost childish admiration. By means of diverse conducting-tubes and by turning cocks in other directions, the jets of water were made to assume unexpected forms and directions, producing set pieces, as in fireworks, to the great delight of the spectators seated upon the turf steps of the auditorium. These settings were called the Sheets, the Lances, the Gate, the Fleurs de lis, the Lesser and the Greater Arbours. The Greater Arbours were the final tableau and, as it were, the apotheosis of this aquatic show. When all the jets shot up, crossed, curved, described segments of circles, assumed different figures, fell and broke with crystalline sparkling, the public became enthusiastic and applauded just as at theatrical performances.

Traces of this admiration are to be found in a description of Versailles, written in heroic verse, by C. Denis, "fountaineer to the King." If he is not much of a poet, at least there is no question of his skill as a hydraulic engineer.

"Finally the Great Arbours, though they come last Yield not to the first in glory and honour. The sight is charming,

I must own: And as long as the Theatre plays, The decorations and the basins, The Sheets and the Gate to the same purpose tending, Send up their varied jets to show us The respect and honour they pay to their master."

In that line, which was by no means too excessive in its adulation at the time, C. Denis, "fountaineer to the King," forestalled the respectful remark of an illustrious Academician: "These two gases will now have the honour of combining in the presence of Your Majesty." The jets of water were to the full as well bred as the gases.

A plantation of trees, now turning into a thicket behind its enclosure of trellis-work, has taken the place of the Water Theatre.

As one proceeds down the carpet of sward, called the *Tapis Vert*, which occupies the centre of the walk that leads from the Fountain of Latona to the Basin of Apollo, there is to be seen on the right, coming from the palace, a narrow oblique walk, leading to a sort of amphitheatre enclosed by railings. This part of the gardens was formerly called the Domes, and it is indeed the name it still bears, though the domes have vanished.

When the key had creaked in the lock and the gate

yielded to the pressure I put upon it, I entered within a circular space enclosed by a quickset hedge. Above the hedge rose into the blue heavens tall, elegant trees well fitted to vie with the sparkling ascending jets of water, perfect trees of a royal garden, that had, nevertheless, having been left to themselves for a few years, regained a certain amount of independence and of natural waywardness. The ivy, quite uninvited, had made its way into the hedge and had cast its garlands upon the statues that were trying to steady themselves upon their crumbling pedestals. It had encircled with a green sash the waist of a lissome Diana, and had bestowed a leafy cothurn upon a mythological hero. In the absence of the gardener, the grass was amusing itself growing out of bounds and showing upon the walks. It was a most delightful retreat; the nightingales, intoxicated by the scent of the flowers of May, rivalled each other in the execution of their most brilliant roulades, and seemed to be taking part, in the presence of a winged arbiter, in a competition of song like the Minnesingers at the Wartburg.

Thoughtfully I sat down within the deserted space, forgetful of the purpose of my visit — the restoration of the former aspect of the place. But, when I re-

membered it, I had a fairly easy task, a part of the ruins left standing indicating the original plan with sufficient distinctness.

A circular bench, divided into four steps descending to the hollow where lies the basin of the jet of water, has for a back a balustrade broken at intervals by acroters or pedestals adorned with low *bassi-relievi*, carved with infinite skill, and representing military attributes: trophies, weapons, standards, drums, bugles, bucklers with the head of Medusa, all rather indistinguishable at the first glance, blackened, rusted, green with lichens, spotted here and there with a leprous dry moss, disjointed, cracked, but not irrevocably damaged. Upon that bench, with its majestic curve against the verdant background of the hedge, it would not take much imagination to see sitting the members of an areopagus.

Now let us restore in thought the two domes, or pavilions, rather, which were falling into ruin and which Louis-Philippe caused to be taken down, no doubt because the expense of restoration appeared to be too great. The domes were placed opposite each other on either side of the round space, the centre of which is occupied by the basin. They were quadran-

gular in form, decorated with pillars and pilasters of the Ionic order, and a pediment bearing the arms of France. The ornaments on the roof, on the pediments, the genii on the coping, supporting the fleur-de-liséd crown, the trophies of weapons on the inner and outer panels, placed between the pillars, and the friezes were in gilded bronze, while the rich marble pavement formed a very exquisite mosaic. The whole presented an ensemble at once splendid and gallant. The dimensions of the buildings could not have been very great, judging from the remains of the foundations that have been razed to the ground.

Let us clear of the mosses, the parasitical plants, and the black stains the white and the red-veined marbles of the circular balustrade and of the hexagonal one in which the basin itself is set; let us set close the disjointed blocks, replace a few broken balusters, clear away the rubbish from the beautiful fountain supported by dolphins, and whence shot up a jet of water to a height of seventy feet, and we shall have pretty nearly the original aspect of the Domes. To make the effect complete, let us cause to flow in the channel on the second balustrade the water which spurted from the pedestals set among the balusters, and make the mass

flow in a broad sheet into the interior of the basin; let us bring back from Saint-Cloud, where they must be even now, Louis-Philippe having caused them to be set in the private gardens of the palace, the beautiful statues of "Daybreak," "Ino," "Acis the shepherd," "the Hunting Diana," "Galatea," "Amphitrite," and "Arion," the work of the skilful sculptors Legros, Rayol, Tuby, Magnier, Anselme Flamen, Michel Anguier, and Raon; let us replace them on their pedestals in the place of the odds and ends of statues of uneven height, brought from the Little Trianon, and the Great King would find nothing changed in the Domes. He would feel no surprise at not seeing the statue of Victory standing upon the basin, since he himself caused it to be removed, impelled by a modesty most unusual in him. Perchance he was wrong in doing so, for the "Victory" harmonised well with the warlike and triumphal character of the whole scheme of decoration.

IV

THE LABYRINTH, ÆSOP'S FABLES, THE ROYAL ISLE OR ISLE OF LOVE, THE BALL-ROOM

If one faces away from the palace and proceeds to the end of the terrace, one comes upon a basin adorned

with two bronze groups representing, the one, a tiger fighting a bear, the other, a dog pulling down a stag. The fountain is easily known by the pretty statue by Legros, which stands out white against the background of sombre verdure that shades the basin. The companion statue, one of Flora, if I am not mistaken, is merely gracefully decorative, but Legros' work has a charm all its own. It represents water; the arch features are surmounted by a wreath of reeds, and the troublous expression makes one think of Shakespeare's "perfidious as the wave." With one hand she holds up her drapery that rises no higher than the hips, and in the other she bears an urn from which flows a marble wave. Her foot rests upon a dolphin whose forked tail twists and turns, and which gives firmness to the figure. The stone has been wrought with a suppleness, one might even say a fluidity, most appropriate to the subject; it is indeed water condensed into the form of a woman. Legros' statue is full of modern feeling, and contrasts with its placid sisters whose beauty remains majestic, and who might ride in the King's carriages.

From this basin, the ground sinks between the Orangery wall, the angle of which is marked by a

copy of the Cleopatra of antiquity, that bears traces of the same oxidation which had imparted flesh tints to the "Three Steps of Rose Marble," and a magnificent clump of trees, clipped in palisade form for half their height, and then curving in dome form up to their summits. This walk — one of the finest in the gardens, in my opinion, thanks to the mingling of foliage and architecture — slopes down rather sharply and leads to the door of the Orangery, formed of a rustic order, the noble and grave style of which is worthy of the palace.

Almost opposite are to be seen two very simple pillars, supporting a perfectly plain iron-work gate, the open leaves of which invite one to enter a cool and shady grove, in which the seeker after silence finds solitude, and is but rarely disturbed by visitors. This is the place where formerly was situated one of the curiosities of the gardens of Versailles, now completely destroyed, and which was called "The Labyrinth" or "Æsop's Fables."

There is nothing left of the original arrangement. The quickset hedges that formed the maze disappeared at the time of the general cutting-down of trees that took place under Louis XVI, the object of which was,

no doubt, to allow of the gardens being replanted in the fashion of the day. To-day the grove is merely a thicket, that might well be thought older than it is, in view of the size and the leafiness of the trees. In the centre has been made a sort of clearing surrounded by huge tulip-trees that recall the giant tulip-tree in Edgar Allan Poe's "Gold Bug."

In the centre of that space, stands, with her gesture of pudicity, a statue of the Venus of Medici, moulded from the original and cast in green bronze, in the days of the Renaissance, by the Fontainebleau artists. The green is not due to the patina; it is part and parcel of the mass of the metal itself, and has not the verdigrised hues of other bronzes that have been exposed to wind and rain. A peculiarity of these castings is that the statues are not connected with the pedestal, and merely have under the feet something like a broad sandal, a bronze sole by which they are screwed down to the stone or marble pedestal. This particular figure is exquisitely graceful and realises the idea of prettiness such as the Greeks understood it.

The "Venus of Medici" is very small, its stature not exceeding that of our elegant Parisian women; it is

not more than four feet six inches high, as I ascertained by comparing the length of the shadow it casts with my own shadow. Four vases, slender and bold, with light handles, the sides of each adorned with a crab with crooked claws, that is, rather, the Cancer of the zodiac, are placed symmetrically around it, and must have once spouted water out of their orifices. They are quite simple, but possess a certain haughtiness of pride and elegance that is lacking in the vases, nevertheless so handsome and so rich, of the Louis XIV period.

A curious effect, but by no means an unpleasant one, is produced by the green statue and the green vases in the penumbra that makes the light itself greenish; it is a rest after the incessant whiteness of marble and its background of verdure.

I find, however, that I am engaged in describing the modern garden, while it is with the bosquet of olden days that I have to do. Let me get back to my labyrinth. By the gate stood sentry two statues in painted lead, representing, the one, Cupid, and the other, Æsop, the fabulist; the former was the work of Legros, the latter, that of Baptiste Tuby.

I take from a guide of that day the following pas-

sage: "Cupid holds a ball of thread in its hands, to signify that while the god at times leads us into a maze of difficulties, at the same time it gives us the means of making our way through them and surmounting them. Meanwhile Æsop appears to be urging that the ball of thread is useless, because without wisdom one can never escape from the pitfalls dug by love." This strikes me as an admirable explanation, and as ingenious a piece of interpretation as Kreutzer's "Symbolics." The presence of Cupid and Æsop at the entrance to the maze is fully justified: folly leads us in, and wisdom helps us out.

These two statues are still in existence in one of the cellars in the palace, where I saw them covered with dust and cobwebs. They yet show traces of colouring that give them a rather terrifying aspect of life in death and of spectral reality. Cupid, half-nude, as beseems a mythological personage, was formerly painted a flesh colour, as children say. The flesh colour has faded and assumed cadaverous hues, like those of a wax figure that has lost its rouge; yet, under the lividness, one readily notes the youthful elegance of the son of Venus, represented like the Greek Eros, under the form of a lad of fifteen.

Æsop is a striking example of realism which one does not expect to meet with in works of a period when the very name of realism was unknown. He is indeed the hunch-backed philosopher, dressed in the Phrygian slave's smock-frock, wearing coarse sandals of rags or cords, and every wrinkle in his ugly face is full of wit. His rags have preserved faint traces of red and blue, and his face, with its ochre and Sienna hues, seems to have been burned, tanned, and baked by the sun. Seen in the light that streams in through the air-hole of the cellar and bathed in deep shadows, the figure is almost living.

Would it not be possible to take these two statues from the cellar in which they are going to ruin and to replace them at the entrance to the Labyrinth? All they need is a little restoring and a fresh coat of paint.

Close by them, in the same place, lies a confused heap of figures of animals cast in lead, some broken, some whole, brackets, ornaments, among others a table wreathed with vine leaves and bunches of grapes, black and red, that came from the fountains in the Labyrinth, thirty-nine in number, which each illustrated one of Æsop's fables. Every one of the ani-

mals in the fables was reproduced life-size and with its proper colouring. Two monkeys, taken from one of these fountains, less carefully studied out and less zoölogically correct than Decamps', but most freely and cleverly wrought out, are now grimacing on the balcony of the Curator of the Museum. It is plain from their backward-thrown attitude, their necks bent back, their swollen cheeks and their distended jaws, that they formerly spurted into the air a jet of water that splashed down on their noses. The other groups were probably melted down at the time of the Revolution.

It is much to be regretted that this bosquet was suppressed, for it would have shown that there existed at the beginning of Louis XIV's reign, far more fancifulness and love of colour than is supposed. It was only little by little that taste became purer and tended to the regularity, occasionally so monotonous, which it afterwards attained. Art in the days of Louis XIII was very capricious, and yielded but unwillingly to the rule of Classicism. It was rather inclined to Spanish pomposity and Romanticist picturesqueness, and the transition from one style to another never takes place abruptly; a certain amount of familiarity was still admissible, and Louis XIV had not yet said, on seeing

the masterpieces of the Flemish school, "Remove these grotesques!"

The Labyrinth was designed by Le Nôtre, or Le Nautre, as the name was then spelt, and consisted of a complicated network of walks cutting each other at right angles or forming curves that were so planned as to lead the pedestrian astray even had he possessed the ball of thread held by the god of Love. At each turn stood a fountain in fine rocaille, on which was realistically represented one of Æsop's fables, the subject being told in an inscription in four lines, engraved in golden letters upon a bronze plate painted black. The verses were by Benserade; they have been collected, and, truth to tell, are not worth much. For the matter of that, it was no easy task to condense a fable of Æsop's into a quatrain.

Just inside the entrance was seen the group of the Great Owl and the Birds. At the back of the fountain rose a half-dome of trellis-work and stone, serving for a roosting-place to a multitude of birds: parrots, jays, blackbirds, doves, linnets, finches, bullfinches, every one of them spurting water out of their beaks at the great owl, perched upon a stone in the middle of a basin of rock-work, and surrounded by

aquatic birds: cranes, storks, and herons, that were also spurting water. The idea was assuredly a pretty conceit for a fountain, and the birds, painted in the brightest colours, must have been very effective when thus seen through the trellises, the greenery, and the diamond spray of the flowing waters. The owl had excited the indignation of the feathered tribe "by its lugubrious hooting and its ugly plumage." The bronze explanatory plate bore the following quatrain, written, as well as all the others, in rondeau form, by the author of Ovid's "Metamorphoses."

"The birds seeing the owl in broad daylight appear, Upon it dashed because of its aspect hideous. Perfect as one may be, None escapes a dig."

In the centre of the Labyrinth rose a pavilion or cabinet, "the design of the ceiling being most pleasant to behold," say contemporary descriptions. The last fountain met with, which indicated that the difficulties of the maze had been successfully overcome, was called the Geese and the Poodle.

"A poodle pursued some geese, But came back a wiser and a sadder dog. Some desires are as useless as they are profane; Never be sure of aught but what you hold."

Leclerc has engraved a charming series of etchings of these fables. The frontispiece of a little book of that day, to which I refer in the writing of this article, gives an interesting bit of information concerning the manners of the time. A young lady is issuing from the Labyrinth gate, drawn in a wheelbarrow by an athletic porter. She is fanning herself coquettishly as she flirts with a dandy walking by her side and speaking sweet things to her. She is preceded by a runner, a nimble Basque dressed in a short jacket, a toque with a feather, a belt with falling ends drawn tight round his waist, and carrying a tall silver-topped stick. At Stuttgart I saw a runner, no doubt the last of his race, dressed exactly like that, who made use of his stick to lift up or vault over obstacles, as *toreros* use their goads. Strange indeed was that figure from the past turning up in our own days. These runners always preceded carriages, and people who are familiar with Egyptian sayces and Spanish zagalas will feel no surprise at this.

Besides, the use of wheelbarrows was common in the times of Louis XIV, and the Court was in the habit of moving about the gardens carried along very comfortably in this fashion. One of the places best adapted to the wheelbarrow parade was the round of the Great

Basin, called the Royal Isle or the Isle of Love. This basin was not less than eight hundred and thirty-one feet long by three hundred and eighty-three wide. A causeway divided it from another basin, with a turf glacis and of the shape of a fan, which was occasionally called the Mirror. Five jets of water, the central one of which rose to a height of forty-seven feet, shot up from the Great Basin, on which floated a galiot and swans swam about. The vast space was set in a portico of arcaded trees, in front of which stood regular rows of yews clipped to a point. At the back rose two colossal statues of the Farnese " Hercules " and the Farnese " Flora," which had been copied at Rome by Cornu and Raon. Round the Mirror stood four antique marble statues : " Julia Moesa," " Venus emerging from the Bath," " Jupiter Stator," and " Julia Domna." The decoration was completed by two handsome white marble vases by Lefebvre and Legeret.

It is of no use to look for the basin of the Royal Isle, for it was filled up, and replaced under Louis XVIII by an English landscape garden called the King's garden. The tradition goes that this garden is a copy of that at Hartwell House, which Louis XVIII inhabited during his stay in England, but there is no foundation

for the statement. The Basin of the Mirror has been preserved, but the appearance of the place has been completely altered, and the Great King would not know it again. He would, however, recognise the Ball-Room, although the steps of the amphitheatre on which the spectators sat have disappeared, the Serancolin marble flagging and veneering having been removed, the candelabra that supported the tapers having lost all their gilding, and millstones having in many places been substituted for the delicate rocaille and the precious shells of the cascade. The Great King's Court might even now dance there one of those *pas* or *entrées de ballet* for which Benserade wrote librettos and verses.

XXI

A VISIT TO THE RUINS

JUNE, 1871.

I

I WAS very anxious and yet I dreaded to see Paris again, just as one dreads seeing a beloved friend after an illness lest his features should have been altered beyond recognition by suffering. What is there left of that beauty of Paris, once so splendid, that excited the admiration and the envy of the world? What is there left of its former expression on the scarred face and marked by such horrible burns? Would it not be better to retain intact in one's memory the grand, noble, and lovely appearance it had before the disaster? Unquestionably it would, yet man feels the need of making sure of his misfortunes, of gazing long upon his woe, of making it out in all its parts for himself. He insists on seeing what he knows to be, though it is scarcely credible even in the face of so much testimony to its truth, and then the curiosity of the horrible seizes upon one resistlessly, and after hav-

ing stood out for a time, one ends in going "the round of the ruins" like everybody else.

So, free again at last, I was off by the Left Bank Railway. After having been so long a prisoner, compelled to gaze upon one and the same view, one experiences a strange sensation as the country is traversed rapidly, and the bridges, plains, hills, the cloud archipelagoes, the villages, and the white villas scattered amid the greenery fly past. The shortest of excursions assumes the proportions of a voyage. And can it be true that one is about to meet once more the loved ones from whom one has been parted for so many months!

The day was dull, although it was mid-June. Great misshapen clouds, filled with water to bursting, great rain-skins ready to empty themselves out, were dragging their slow length along the horizon, and the veiled sun gave out but a diffused light that made no contrast between the shadows and the lighted parts.

Under the lowering sky the pretty village of Asnières, filled with its tea-gardens, the seaport of Parisian amateur oarsmen, riddled, torn, smashed in, transformed into a heap of whitish rubbish, looked singularly lugubrious, for there is nothing so painful to behold

as a pleasure resort that has been smitten with disaster.

When I got out of the carriage, the rain was falling in the form of melting mist, fine and penetrating. There were few people in the streets, a few cabs that answered not to the pedestrian's call, deep silence as in Venice, the horseless city, and on the faces of men and women an expression of bewilderment or stupor that reminded me of the days of the cholera. Everybody went by close to the walls with hasty or timid steps, no doubt through the habit they had acquired of bewaring of shells and other missiles. On the walls of the houses were great torn places of a fresh, crude white; in the window-sashes, on the panes left intact, strips of paper pasted on and crossed in every direction to deaden the effect of the vibration due to artillery fire; the air-holes of the cellars and basement rooms had been bricked or plastered up for fear of the *pétroleuses*, — a dreadful word unforeseen by the makers of dictionaries; but then, horrors hitherto unknown call for frightful neologisms. The greatness of the destruction was felt rather than seen as yet, and my heart sank within me as at the near approach of something terrible.

The Madeleine, the Greek temple out of its element, that at times, in the moonlight, has a vague resemblance to the Parthenon, exhibited on the damaged fluting of its Corinthian pillars the marks of bullets. The saints, male and female, standing sentry under the portico, had been wounded, not seriously, and the lines of the monument were unchanged. It bore only the cicatrices of an impious combat, but of a combat after all. And farther on the real, the savage, the infernal destruction began.

In the Rue Royale, incendiarism had continued the work done by the shells and cannon-balls. Houses ripped up showed their interiors just like corpses cut open. The flooring from every story had crashed down on top of the cellar arches; charred beams, twisted bars of iron, stairs leading into the void, like the fanciful stairs in Piranesi's architectural visions, avalanches of building stone or bricks, great pieces of walls on which the arrangement of the rooms could still be seen, with the paper on the walls, the mantelpieces, and a bit of furniture spared by the flames — such was the sight that painfully shocked the beholder. But for the huge staying-timbers, the calcined débris would have fallen prone into the street, crushing to

death both passers-by and sight-seers; human activity, however, had already set to work and was clearing away the rubbish, tearing down tottering walls, staying up those that might be utilised; and these were not frequent, alas! It would not be so bad if the loss were merely one of materials, but under the débris lie buried many corpses.

On the Place de la Concorde most of the rostral pillars have been hit and curiously smashed through. Antonin Moine's Nereids have been badly mauled, and the statue of the City of Lille has had its head and its torso carried away by the shells; it is literally cut into two. The statues on the Place seemed to be looking with their staring white eyes, with the mute compassion of stone, upon their poor mutilated sister, and they ought to have retained the band of black crape that had been bound round their temples on the Three Days of Woe.

In some miraculous fashion the Luxor obelisk stood intact upon its gray granite base. The hieroglyphs cut deep upon its sides must surely contain some talismanic formula that has protected it. The gods of ancient Egypt must have watched over it. Only its rose colour, rain-washed, looked sickly; it was plain that Ammon

Râ, the sun that governs the worlds, had not gilded it with its beams for a long time.

A few steps farther I found myself at the Ministry of Finance. Twenty days before I was standing on the plateau of Courbevoie, when the fire, bursting through the roof, exploded in the sky like a volcano, sending up a vast pillar of smoke, the flames in which could not be seen on account of the brilliancy of the sunshine. Presently a prodigious quantity of burned papers fell to the ground like black snow; on most of them could still be made out acknowledgments, receipts, or other official formulæ. They were the *lapilli* of the Vesuvius let loose in the city.

The façade of the Ministry of Finance, as it fell into the street of Rivoli, formed a disorderly tumble of blocks of stones, such as are seen in the beds of Alpine torrents. The falling of the wall laid bare the interior of the building, and through the mighty breach could be seen vistas, mazes, and superimpositions of arcading that recalled the Coliseum at Rome. Through the openings the heavens showed in places and made the likeness the closer. The flames, the smoke, and the combustion of the chemical products used for the purpose of setting fire to the place, had coloured the

ruins with gray, tawny, reddish, bronzed, and brown tones, strange hues that made the ruins look older and imparted to them an appearance of antiquity. Farther on, a perpendicular wall, like the face of a precipice half filled up by an avalanche, remained standing, with the openings of its windows and the remnants of its floors. Curiously enough, there hung from one of these windows a blue-silk blind, in perfect condition, which had actually escaped being burned in the incandescent furnace that calcined stone and melted metals. So one finds occasionally on the edge of a crater, among the ashes and scoriæ, a miraculously preserved little azure flower. Meanwhile the busses were rolling along, almost grazing the groups of passers-by, who had stopped, dumb with horror, in front of the lamentable sight. The invincible life of Paris, that nothing can kill, was little by little resuming its course; neither the siege nor the Commune could destroy it. The city, which some call frivolous, had resisted famine, bombardment, conflagration, foreign war, and civil war. It was believed to be utterly cast down, and forever dead, but it is already raising itself on its elbow, casting a firm glance around, and shaking off its shroud of ruins.

A VISIT TO THE RUINS

As I turned the angle of the Rue Castiglione, by the Ministry of Finance, I experienced a feeling of anxious curiosity, yet I scarcely dared look in front of me, — I had so long been accustomed to see on the summit of the bronze column the imperial Stylites, first in his frock-coat and little three-cornered hat, and more recently draped like a Cæsar, with a Winged Victory in his hand like a god of antiquity. I was well aware that the barbarians of the Commune had made that spiral of battles which rose into the heavens fall from its pedestal, and that they had cast down upon a bed of manure the vast glory of which France had the right to be proud. But I was as amazed as though I had been ignorant of all this when I failed to perceive in the centre of the Place Vendôme the gigantic exclamation point in bronze set on the summit of the First Empire's sonorous phrase. The eye does not easily reconcile itself to such changes in the aspect of places, and on the retina of mine, as on a daguerreotype plate insufficiently cleaned, remained imprinted the black silhouette now absent.

The pedestal, with its eagles displayed at its four corners, its *bassi-relievi* representing armours, helmets, uniforms, and military emblems, its door with the

bronze trellising, similar to that of a cellar, remained standing on the Place. It might have passed for the tomb of a hero, designed in severe style, and composed of conquered trophies, upon which the torus of the fallen column figured like a huge funeral wreath placed there by an army in mourning.

The statue of the Cæsar, which had fallen such a distance, had already disappeared; it had been picked up and put in a safe place. The head had broken away from the trunk, as it fell, but had not rolled very far, so that the dark-green colossus, the size of which could now be seen, resembled the body of a decapitated Titan. Near-by lay, like a huge buckler, the top of the small lantern that formed the top of the column, and on which rested the feet of the statue. In its fall the mighty bronze tube had broken and cracked in more than one place, scattering abroad its white stone entrails. Inside the thin layer of metal there was a whole mountain of stone. Workmen were busy unfastening the pieces of the ascending bas-relief, which still adhered to the axis, broken into fragments, and the plates, as the hammer smote them, resounded with a formidable noise like the clang of armour in battle.

The column is soon to be re-erected; the missing portions of the bas-relief can easily be replaced by making use of the drawings made at the time and which still exist. Nowadays we love and appreciate scrupulous care applied to the restoration of buildings. So in the course of a few months a column identical with the former one shall rise again upon its pedestal, which has been preserved, in all its triumphant height, for it is puerile to blot out history. By and by people will refuse to believe that raging madness actually fastened hawsers to the trophy of our victorious campaigns in order to drag it into the mud, and they will wonder whether it be true that the glorious column did actually disappear for a time from the horizon of Paris.

Close by a most painful surprise awaits one. The flames set by the torches of Hell have destroyed the Tuileries. All that is left are the main walls and the tall monumental chimneys that rise above the ruins, blackened by fire, cracked and threatening to fall. The old sky-line of the palace has vanished; the dome-shaped roof of the Clock Pavilion, which topped the elegant design of Philibert Delorme, has disappeared.

The roofs of the other buildings have also been destroyed and have crashed down into the blaze.

Through the window openings, from which the sashes and the panes are gone, one can see the empty interior of the buildings where, henceforth, owls and birds of night alone will be able to find a lodging. The ruin accomplished in one day is total, and three or four hundred years could not have achieved more. Time, always accused and unjustly called *tempus edax rerum* — "Time, the eater of things," is not nearly as skilful a destroyer as man. But for the savage bestiality of barbarians, nearly every monument of antiquity would have come down to us. Time merely caresses marble with its discerning hand; it completes the beauty of buildings by putting upon them its own patina; it is human violence that is the all-destroyer. Of the Pavilion de Marsan the outer crust alone is left; the interior is gone. The Pavilion de Flore, at the other end of the palace, has, by comparison, suffered less; the roof alone has been burned; the stone-work of the new building resisted the flames, and on the river side Carpeaux' life-like sculptures still animate the façade. The fire broke its way here and there through the roofs of the buildings along the quay, but by a miracle, the conflagration stopped at the point where begins the gallery of the Louvre; the fiery element, less brutal

than man, recoiled from the destruction of masterpieces; it would not reduce to a little heap of ashes all these wonders and annihilate mankind's patents of nobility. It was filled with horror at the thought of such a profanation, but on the Rue de Rivoli, in the Louvre Library, goaded by every means that modern science, when it is turned from its proper ends, has placed at the service of crime, it was forced to consume rare volumes, precious manuscripts, authentic drawings, and, issuing out of the windows, to soil with its smoke the impassible caryatids of the façade which, with bent brows and fixed stare, gaze like sombre Nemeses upon the elegant architecture of the Palais-Royal, devastated, half-ruined, and showing through its blackened pillars, as through the nave of a strange church, the great well of the monumental staircase lighted by a great rose window.

II

No less painful was the sight on the left bank of the Seine. At the entrance of the Rue du Bac were masses of blackened and smoking ruins. The inhabitants had already made their way back and were seeking shelter under the ceilings licked by the flames, and

walking cautiously upon the hastily propped-up floors. Groups formed in front of the doors and entered into conversation, discussing the different phases of the struggle, and holding those open-air pow-wows that precede and follow catastrophes.

Peculiarly sinister was the aspect of the Rue de Lille, from the point where stands Blot's restaurant. It was deserted along its whole length, like a street in Pompeii, and illumined by the livid gleams of the sun setting behind rain-laden clouds. The way the houses were torn along their crests, their roofs and cornices having been destroyed, suggested the effect of the sudden eruption of a volcano by the extent, the rapidity, and the simultaneity of the damage done. The disaster that had overwhelmed them seemed due to a natural catastrophe rather than to the hand of man, who was not hitherto suspected of possessing such powers of swift destruction, and the eye found it hard to reconcile itself to this abrupt change in the appearance of the street.

There was nothing left of the house at the corner of the street, where lived Mérimée, but the outer walls half buried under heaps of charred beams, calcined stone, and débris of all kinds. The carefully selected

and valuable library has been, I am told, entirely destroyed, and it may be that a companion to "Carmen" and "Colomba" flew from the furnace in a burst of sparks. Happily, Mérimée died at Cannes during the course of the first siege and he was spared the grief, so poignant to a man of letters, of learning that his beloved books and manuscripts had been reduced to ashes.

The street was closed, but I was allowed to pass the barrier and I resolutely proceeded down the Way of Desolation, at the risk of being hit on the head by stones falling from cornices. A silence as of death brooded over the ruins; it could not have been more profound in the necropolis of Thebes or in the pits of the Pyramids. No rumble of carriages, no call of children, no song of bird, no distant sound; only a gloomy, grim, supernatural silence one dared not break by speaking aloud; and so I went on, mute by my comrade's side, down the centre of the street, as if it were a mountain pass which one traverses noiselessly lest an avalanche be started. My soul was filled with bitterest woe in the shadowy twilight, and Albrecht Dürer's great melancholy bat outspread its sombre wings in the pale sky into which still rose from the ruins faint vapours like the steam from solfataras.

And I said to myself, astounded and discouraged: "So the civilisation of which we were so proud actually contained in itself savagery so awful! We might have supposed that after the lapse of so many centuries the wild beast in man had been tamed more thoroughly. Where is the Orpheus, the van Amburgh, *doctus lenire tigres*, that shall master it?"

The ruins, due to the fierceness of the conflagration, assumed the strangest shapes and outlines: they were torn, eroded, fallen away in the most unexpected fashion. Here were dolmens, there pylons, elsewhere gables dentelated like Dutch roofs, windows enlarged and gaping like the breaches in a rampart, walls cracked up and down, the open wound resembling the grin of sardonic laughter, a maze of blackened angles simulating the sky-line of a mediæval city in a Romanticist vignette. In places one could see the livid light of the heavens through the roofless, floorless houses, and strange indeed is a bit of sky set in the doorway of what was once a bedroom.

The sculptures on the façades, the ornamented bracketing of the balconies and the mouldings of the cornices of the houses that had not been wholly destroyed, were broken, smashed, smitten by fire, and proved, by the

marks that every one bore, how carefully and methodically the havoc had been wrought. Little is left of the elegant mansions, of the comfortable homes in which taste was united to luxury.

Meanwhile night had fallen and added its own sadness to the woe around, making the vast mass of ruins lugubrious and grim. Their shapes became dim in the shadows and assumed a spectral look. Imagination took the place of reality as the enlargement and metamorphoses effected by the darkness grew, and it seemed as if the sides of the street, with its pools of rain water, were lined with a range of dismantled robber-castles along an imaginary Rhine.

I was so utterly cast down that I could not bring myself to look at the Cour des Comptes and the Palace of the Legion of Honour, and after a light supper I made my way back to my little lodging in the Rue de Beaune, where I had starved so often, and prepared to resume my sorrowful round the next day.

The Cour des Comptes, rising on the banks of the Seine, looks like a Venetian palace, especially when the oblique rays of the setting sun strike its façade, and it would not be out of place on the Grand Canal near the Palazzo Grassi, the style of which it recalls. Its

elegant silhouette on the quay has not been materially changed by the fire, the building having preserved its lines; but it looks as if three or four centuries had passed over it; it has grown old suddenly; flame and smoke have put upon it in a few hours the patina of time.

Thanks to the kindness of a friend of mine, auditor in the Cour des Comptes, the palace gates were opened to me and I was able to enter the devastated place. Swayed by a feeling which every artist will blame me for, but will readily understand, I was first and foremost struck by the *beauty* of the ruins. No doubt any other impression would have been more natural: grief, anger, hatred, the desire for vengeance; yet it was involuntary admiration that filled me at the sight of the court surrounded with two stories of porticoes the mutilated architecture of which, in consequence of the damage it had suffered, had acquired a grand and tragic aspect. The former slight hardness and coldness of the lines had been improved by the breaks in, and the intersequences of, the acroters and the balusters, by the fall of a cornice, by the breaking away of a wall that laid bare an arcade opening out on the heavens. Possibly art might learn something from the rude teaching of fire which gives

light and air to buildings too compactly set. The divine charm of the Parthenon would be lost were the opening filled up that lets a spread of blue within the golden whiteness of its marble.

To wander about ruins is as interesting as to read a novel by Ann Radcliffe, and so I went along passages strewn with rubbish, looked eagerly into rooms that had lost their doors, into chambers the wainscotting of which had been torn off or reduced to ashes, Council halls on the walls of which were still faintly discernible traces of paintings. In the midst of such chaos one tries to put everything back in its place, to restore the appearance of the building, and to recall the ghosts of days gone by. Imagination evokes what has been but recently destroyed, and delights in the task. Then there is some peril in such a visit. The void between one landing and another must be crossed on a bending plank; heaps of rubbish that give way when stepped on have to be climbed; stairs, their railings gone and their steps missing or disjointed like the steps of the Propylæa, have to be ascended, an arch that threatens to fall has to be traversed, and as one clutches at the calcined stones they crumble into powder at the touch. My friend, the auditor at the Cour des

Comptes, being as bold as he is agile, overcame all these obstacles, and went right round the gallery on the first floor trying to reach his former office of which he could see the mantelpiece, stuck like a bracket against the wall fifty feet in the air, but the wells of the staircases had been turned into gaping voids that could be reached by bats alone.

I was very anxious to ascertain whether, in the great staircase of the palace, anything was left of the mural paintings, the work of my dear and ever-regretted friend Théodore Chassériau. He attached great importance to this vast work, which he had carried out with the feverish activity and the rapid persistency that marked everything he did, just as if he had had a presentiment of his approaching death, and turned time to account like a man who knows that his hours are few.

The gate was torn away and all twisted up, and down the lower steps streamed and rattled a flood of stones fallen from the upper floors. At the foot of the stairway, in the darkest part, the artist had painted in grisaille, in a light tone and soft relief, on the left, a sort of "Penserosa," bending with thoughtful brow over a book open before her, and on the right, horses and warriors. The one represented Thought, the

other Action. These paintings, that are like the blank pages bearing merely a fleuron or a title, which are put at the head of poems, are neither burned nor damaged; they remain pallid, as they were intended to be, and still visible in the penumbra like white phantoms haunting a ruin.

I ascended as far as I could up the torrent of rubbish, and discovered the great composition "Peace," so noble in style and so masterly in execution, which filled up the whole upper wall of the staircase. But alas! in what a condition! blackened, bulged, constellated with blisters by the heat, covered with soot by the smoke, yet the main lines still recognisable. Under a triple layer of yellow varnish I made out the lovely group in which Chassériau had symbolised the Arts of Peace: "Tragedy," "Dancing," "Music," "Lyric Poetry," representing, dressed in allegorical costumes, Rachel, Carlotta Grisi, and other artists of the day whose reputation, talent, or beauty made them worthy of forming part of this new Parnassus. The dark glance of "Tragedy" and the rosy smile of "Dancing" had not been greatly injured by the flames.

The painting representing "War," which formed the contrast and the companion to "Peace," upon the

other wall, has suffered horribly and must be considered as irrecoverably lost.

The group of "Neptune and Amphitrite," the proud port of which recalls the mythological paintings of Giulio Romano, is yet discernible at the back of the landing, but the work is none the less destroyed in its ensemble, and the artist's memory is thus deprived of a splendid proof of his talent, nay, let me say of his genius, which was not sufficiently appreciated by his contemporaries.

As I gazed upon the disaster that had befallen these works, I felt the bitterness of woe caused by the irreparable. A palace may be rebuilt, but a vanished masterpiece, a painting swallowed up in a whirl of fire and smoke are destroyed as utterly as a soul that cannot be reconstituted. It was not the body of my friend that had been consumed upon that infamous pile, but his very soul.

The ceiling painted by Gendron, in which allegory wove and unwove in the blue heavens wreaths of white and rosy women exquisite in their grace, has fallen into the incandescent gulf that opened beneath it. Eugène Delacroix' "Justinian," a magnificent painting endowed with the tawny splendour of a Byzantine mosaic,

has been destroyed also, as well as paintings by Paul Delaroche and many other valuable works.

In the court-yard, borne about by a faint breath of air, were fluttering little bits of burned paper, black butterflies of the conflagration hovering over the ruins in a luminous beam.

Not far off the Palace of the Legion of Honour exhibited its elegant ruins, with its windows so happily proportioned, its delicate *bassi-relievi*, its busts set in oval niches, and all the dainty architecture of which it is the most perfect specimen, horribly damaged and bearing the fiery scars of conflagration. Yet, as the building is but one story high, it will not be difficult to rebuild and restore it to its original condition. This is a task which every one of the men who wear the red spark on their breasts will not allow to be discharged by others, for it is the duty of the members of the Legion of Honour to restore the Temple of Honour which on festal nights set its glorious star amid the stars of heaven, and showed from afar shining softly yet proudly as the Star of the Fatherland.

III

These ruins, so suddenly wrought, strangely impress the beholder. It is as if two thousand years had passed away in the course of a single night; as if the poet's dream were realised, who saw Paris a dead city, recognisable only by a few remains scattered on the banks of Seine: the Column prone in the grass and like

"The monstrous clarion of a vanished Titan;"

the broken bulk of the towers of Notre-Dame still rising above the wild growth of vegetation; the Arch of Triumph half ruined, like one of Rhameses' pylons, and its *bassi-relievi* of battles and victories outlined in moss. Happily Paris still lives; the incendiaries applied the torch first to the monuments, but were unable to complete their work of destruction. All the same the feeling experienced in presence of the blackened and calcined ruins is assuredly that time has been anticipated. The distant Future has suddenly become the Present, and offers to the beholder a picture such as one sees only through the misty vistas of dreams.

Every one knows how beautiful is the sky-line of the City, the cradle of Paris, when seen from the Pont

des Arts or the Pont des Saints-Pères. The towers of Notre-Dame, the slender spire of the Sainte-Chapelle, sparkling with gold, the pepper-pot roofs of the Law Courts, the sharp ridge of the Clock Tower, their innumerable projections cutting into the heavens, have preserved, in the centre of the modern city, a Gothic aspect and physiognomy marvellously appropriate to the associations of the old town. For a time, when the mighty clouds of smoke shrouded the picturesque and grandiose group of buildings, there was reason to fear that the Sainte-Chapelle, the masterpiece of Pierre de Montereau, traceried like a golden reliquary, would be consumed — a dreadful loss ! — in that vast furnace, but by a happy chance that would in olden days have been termed a miracle, the flames respectfully stopped there, and when the conflagration was extinguished the gilded angel was seen still poised upon the shining spire. The fire died out of itself in the nave of Notre-Dame, unable to affect the granite pillars meant to last to all eternity. But the new Law Courts designed by Duc have greatly suffered, internally especially, for the robust Doric pillars on the façade still stand upright, in spite of the jets of burning petroleum with which they were flooded. The remarkable paint-

ings by Lehmann and Bonnat have perished, and the handsome building, but recently completed and which had gained for its designer the prize of a hundred thousand francs, will have to be rebuilt from roof to cellar. The buildings of the Préfecture de Police are partially burned down. Of course it was to this point that the rioters first proceeded, for there it is that in mysterious archives is kept the Golden Book of crime, and every factionist expects to destroy the record of his own past by the mere act of tearing the page on which it is written. On that book are inscribed by anonymous hands thefts, forgeries, murders, infamies of all sorts, the years spent in prison or the penitentiary. Every man out of his class and open to suspicion has his record there. At a given moment the evil done in darkness reappears livid and hideous, and in the new tribune is recognised the former spy. At the Préfecture de Police they know where the carrion is, and it therefore becomes the *delenda Carthago* of the insurrection.

Notwithstanding the serious damage done, the external appearance of these buildings is capable of being preserved or restored, and the passer-by, as he crosses the Seine just beyond the Carrousel gates, will still

enjoy that splendid view, unrivalled in the world, which the "Illustration" has adopted for its heading, as characteristic of Paris, and at the other end of the quay he will still be able to see the time upon the azure dial of the square tower under its fleur-de-liséd awning.

On the right bank the unfortunate Théâtre-Lyrique has filled up the cup of its ill-luck with disaster. It has been burned down, while the Châtelet has remained almost intact; the flames as they burst out shivered the sashes and made broad black marks on the walls. And now the valiant company, after struggling energetically against ill-luck and having done good service in the cause of music, is on the street. Happily Paris has inexhaustible vitality, and the Théâtre-Lyrique will rise again from its ashes in which the spell that an evil eye cast upon it, will prove to have been consumed. Then Fate, satisfied at last, will cease to pursue it.

I shall not speak in detail of the houses on the Rue de Rivoli that have been smashed by artillery and burned with fire, for variety in destruction is limited; evil itself is not infinite, and there are not many ways for a house to be devoured by flames and to fall into ruins. It is always walls ripped apart, window openings enlarged and shapeless, avalanches of stone and

rubbish, queer mazes of beams fallen one upon another and bringing down with them roofs and floors, chimney stacks rising amid the ruins like blackened obelisks, the interiors of rooms revealed by the fall of a partition, and showing up like a stage scene, or an architectural section, and all manner of accidents which it is impossible to describe in writing, but which are preserved in the illustrated papers. Besides, in front of every ruin in the least picturesque are to be seen standing the vans that serve photographers for dark-rooms, and the pictures thus taken will become historical documents of incontestable authenticity. But for them, who, once Paris shall have repaired its losses, could possibly believe in the monstrous deeds of the anonymous imitators of Erostratus?

Let us push on to the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, where devastation has displayed itself in all the grandeur of the horrible. One is smitten with sorrow and despair at the sight of the young ruin wrought by the hand of man; the frenzy of abominable sectaries has destroyed in one day a building that would have lasted for centuries.

The fire has spared nothing; it has passed everywhere like a conqueror, devouring, calcining what it

left standing, and directed in its blind fury by an infernal will. Had demons set to work they could not have improved upon it. On the side of the Place de Grève (Place de l'Hôtel de Ville) the elegant façade, formerly topped by the slender campanile characteristic of Town Halls, stretched out in a lamentable state of dilapidation, cracked, burst open, the jagged edges of the breaches showing out against the sky, and coloured with startling hues from the ardent palette of the conflagration. On the façade the statues of scholars, artists, magistrates, ædiles, famous personages, the glory and honour of the City, were twisted into convulsive attitudes like the victims of a vast auto-da-fe on the *quemadero* of some old Spanish city. What a hellish delight, what atrocious enjoyment it has been for these perverted souls to burn genius, glory, and honour, in effigy at least! Fortunately History cannot be set on fire with a jet of petroleum; the Present in its madness is unable to suppress the irrevocable Past. It was pitiful to see these poor great men, lacking arms or legs, beheaded, cut in twain, these glorious mutilated beings, striped with black by the burns they have suffered, scratched with white scratches made by projectiles, according to the chances and changes

of battle. On the tympanum of the campanile door could be made out the outline of the bas-relief, torn off, that represented Henry IV on horseback. It looked like the shadow fixed on the wall, by some secret process after the horseman had gone by. Only, the shadow was white.

Henceforth the inhabitants of Paris will not set their watches by the dial, rivalling that of the Exchange, which, at night, shone radiant on the dark front of the building, for the clock has fallen with the ruins of the interior of the belfry.

The court entered through this door looks like the chimney of a volcano; it was indeed the main crater. Ten barrels of powder had been deposited in the thick vaulted cellars. The explosion was so violent that all the projecting parts of the inner walls were razed, and the bronze Louis XIV, which formed a companion to the Francis I, on the landing of the staircase up and down which passed the guests at so many splendid entertainments, was detached from its pedestal and pitched into the very heart of the furnace, itself soon buried under a vast agglomeration of ruins.

Every capital has lost its acanthus leaves, every pillar its flutings, every cornice its modillions, every

window its pediment; the very flesh of the building appears to have been consumed, leaving only the framework of bones.

Led by a guide, I proceeded down a maze of half-cleared passages and halls, through which, although I have often been in the Hôtel de Ville, I could not have found my way unaided, so greatly has the appearance of the place been changed. We went first through the kitchens, the household offices, and the lower stone-flagged rooms in which the fire had found less to destroy than elsewhere, and we thus reached the stairs leading to the reception-rooms. Lamentable indeed was the spectacle of the havoc so wickedly wrought! Of the magnificent drawing-rooms naught is left save the walls, cracked, baked, as in an oven, and scarce retaining the indications of the original arrangements; the gilding is gone, and every minute great pieces of stucco fell away from the walls and crashed on the floors the planking of which has been burned away; the marble of the pillars, turned to lime, has become spongy or friable. Not a trace is left of the former splendour. The Festival Gallery keeps but faint traces, in its arcadings and side recesses, of the paintings by Lehmann. Not one of the great panels on the vaulting is left. The im-

mense work, almost improvised, which did such infinite honour to the artist, fell with the ceiling itself. In the Hall of the Caryatids, next the Festival Gallery, Cabanel's compositions, representing the Twelve Months, can still be made out, in a way, under the soot, the blisters, and the cracks. The main lines can be perceived under the veil of smoke, but the colours, carbonised, have lost their values. "January," of all the months in the year, resisted most stubbornly, and has remained almost intact. A sixteenth-century poet would not have failed to indulge in punning remarks and antitheses about "icicles" and "flames" and the combat between Vulcan and Winter, in which the god of cold had won the victory. These lovely paintings were to be reckoned amongst the most graceful works of the master.

As I walked through the deserted rooms, I felt cracking under my feet fragments of bright blue porcelain; they were the débris of the State service. I also came upon scoriæ of curious appearance, seemingly vitrified, and cast into the oddest of shapes, which had originally been cut-glass melted and reduced to a paste by the intensity of the heat. The iron trusses of the ceilings had been twisted up in the hellish furnace like branches of green wood, and were hanging

inside the dismantled rooms, looking like the rigging of a ship that has been blown up.

After many a turn, and ascending stairs the steps of which have been temporarily replaced by boards, we reached a door that opens out upon an abyss three stories deep, the floors having given way under the fierce fire and forming on the ground-floor a chaos of rubbish. On the side of the huge wall, which rises without a break from the foundations to the roof, now gone, shows the monumental mantelpiece surmounted by the portrait of Napoleon I, by Gérard, of which the frame only has withstood the flames, and in which was set the rock-crystal medallion, representing Napoleon III, a masterpiece by Froment Meurice. On the ceiling of this hall, which fell into the abyss, a flaming lake of petroleum, was formerly seen in all its radiance the "Apotheosis of Napoleon I," by Ingres, a marvellous painting, or a giant cameo, rather superior in style, perfection, and beauty, to the Sainte-Chapelle agate, the subject of which is "Augustus received among the Gods." It is an irreparable disaster! A masterpiece that enabled modern art to rival the art of antiquity, and that proved human genius had not degenerated since the days of Phidias and Apelles is now lost for-

ever, reduced to ashes, vanished beyond recall! Surely they must feel satisfied, the senseless and ferocious barbarians who sent Homer to the Blind Asylum and longed to destroy Raphael; all the mad iconoclasts, inveterate enemies of Beauty, which is the highest aristocracy; the monstrous Calibans, sons of the Fiend and of Sycorax the witch, always ready to lick Trinculo's boots in return for a drink of liquor, misshapen beings compounded of mud and blood, diabolically perverse natures doing evil for the love of evil, amazing wickedness itself by their crimes, for it cannot understand them, and reaping no other profit from their deeds than the execration of the whole world! They will not even enjoy the undesirable fame of Erostratus, who, in order to secure immortality, burned down the temple of Diana at Ephesus, for human memory will refuse to remember their accursed names.

Equally hideous is the destruction in the other pavilion. The paintings of Eugène Delacroix in the Hall of Peace, paintings displaying such fecundity of invention, such magnificence of colour, are now but a memory. In vain would one look on the tympana of the arcades for the "Twelve Labours of Hercules," at once so antique and so modern, in which mythology

gained such intensity of Romanticist life under the painter's fiery brush. The Commune raised for the demigod a pyre larger and hotter by far, too, than that on Œta from which he sprang once more to Olympus. The hero who slew the Nemean lion, the wild boar of Erymanthus, the Lernæan hydra, the Stymphalian birds, who mastered the Cretan bull and the horses of Diomedes, fed on human flesh, who drew the three-headed dog from Hades, who delivered Hesione from the marine orc, would perchance have hesitated had Eurystheus commanded him to combat the monsters of the Commune.

The Hall of the Zodiac, which contained L. Coignet's paintings, is entirely gone, as is also the Francis I Hall, with its fine mantelpiece, the carvings on which were the work of John Goujon. On the frieze of the dining-room may be seen a few traces of Jadin's little genii playing with the attributes of hunting and fishing; along one of the passages, Hubert Robert's paintings, somewhat protected from the flames, have been merely scorched a little, but the views of the environs of Paris, due to the most famous landscape painters of the present day, are as thoroughly burned as if they had been cast into the crater of Ætna. The enu-

meration of all the art losses caused by the fire would fill a catalogue.

While I was traversing the great ruin, the clouds had turned hell-black and sulphurous-gray, and were big with electricity and storm. They swept over the roofless building like great birds of night fleeing before the gale. Into the hypethral halls suddenly lighted up by livid glare of lightning, the rain was falling driven by the wind, while the thunder roared with sinister sounds that were re-echoed by the empty depths of the fallen building. To regain the entrance, I had to go around and at times to pass through pools of water and lakelets collected in the passages and courts. The storm and the ruins harmonised superbly.

XXII

THE VENUS OF MILO

JULY, 1871.

AT the beginning of the war, after our first disasters and at the time when the rapid advance of the Germans brought the investment of the great city within the range of possibility, steps were taken to protect from the dangers of a siege and the rapacity of a foe who might prove victorious the richest gems in the casket of the Louvre, the pearls and diamonds of painting that could not be replaced at any price.

The Leonardo da Vincis, the Raphaels, the Titians, the Paolo Veroneses, the Correggios, the Rembrandts were carefully rolled up and sent to Brest ready to be shipped away at the first alarm, the risk of storm being preferred to that of fire. But it was impossible to carry off and put into safety in the same manner the antique statuary; the weight of the marble blocks, the size of the statues, the care involved by their comparative fragility, and the little time left for preparations prevented

their being sent on to join the paintings. So the hall in which they were contained was merely protected, and the windows filled with sandbags in order to make them safe from shells and projectiles.

Among these statues is one envied by all the museums in Europe, and which rightly passes for the highest type of beauty, for the most perfect realisation of the "eternal feminine." Every one knows it is the "Venus of Milo." What troubled both the lovers of art and the curators of our museums was the possibility of the adorable Greek goddess turning Prussian and emigrating from Athens to Berlin. They therefore considered the means of placing her in absolute safety. They caused the wondering Venus to be removed from her pedestal, and they laid her divine marble body within an oaken box, in the shape of a coffin, padded and wadded in such wise that no shock, no jar should damage the perfect contours of her beautiful frame. At dead of night trustworthy men bore the precious coffer to a secret door of the Louvre, where other men were waiting, who, surprised at its weight, carried it off to a place known to them alone.

A grave had been prepared in the substructures of the Préfecture de Police for the glorious resuscitated

being that was once more to return for a time into the darkness and the shadow which had held it for so many centuries. What a superb poem might have been written on the nocturnal funeral journey of the immortal one by Heinrich Heine, the poet of the "Gods in Exile," had he lived until our day! And what ironical apostrophes he would have addressed to the hordes of the followers of Kant and Hegel, whose approach causes a dweller in Olympus to seek a refuge in the Rue de Jérusalem!

A hiding-place was contrived at the end of one of the mysterious passages that run through the depth and thickness of such complex buildings as the Préfecture de Police used to be, and the real extent of which it is difficult to grasp. The wall built up at the end of the passage was stained to give it the appearance of age, and the "Venus" was placed behind it. As this, however, would have been too apparent and too innocent a mode of disguising the place, and as it takes more skill to deceive treasure seekers, whose sagacity equals that of Auguste Dupin, in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Stolen Letter," and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," portfolios, registers, and documents of some importance, which were such as it would be natural to seek to con-

ceal, were piled up pell-mell between this wall and another which was erected somewhat in front of it. If they did make their way into this dark closet, a false hiding-place masking the real one, the "sounders" would believe they had achieved their purpose when they beheld the pile of papers, and would be satisfied with their booty. Rather an ingenious idea.

The "Venus of Milo" spent the whole of the first part of the siege in this profound seclusion, to the great anxiety of her admirers who were ignorant of her fate. It was a little wearisome, no doubt, but she had got used to silence and darkness during her stay of centuries within the crypt from which she was drawn by Yorgos, the Greek peasant. And besides, she was, like a true immortal, indifferent to the flight of days.

She was just about to be restored in her radiant beauty to her pedestal, the altar of Beauty, and to the love of the artists and poets who had mourned her absence, when came the Commune with its host of barbarians, come, not from the Cimmerian fogs, but sprung up from the Paris pavements like the foul fermentation of subterranean filth. The æsthetics of these fierce sectaries and their contempt for the ideal are well known. In their hands the goddess, had they discovered her,

would have run great risk; they would have sold or broken her up as being a proof of human genius offensive to levelling stupidity. Is not the aristocracy of masterpieces that which most offends envious mediocrity? It is quite natural that the ugly should hate the beautiful.

Fortunately the secret of the translation had been well kept, and the "Venus," during the second as during the first siege, slept peacefully within her hiding-place. But then came the dreadful day when the Commune, "determined to have a funeral pomp worthy of itself," lighted, like tripods set on the way traversed by a funeral cortège, the monuments of Paris, which had been soaked with petroleum. The Préfecture de Police was set on fire, and those who knew where the goddess that had disappeared from the Louvre was concealed became a prey to the liveliest fears. Was the "Venus," after having escaped the Prussian shells, to be burned up in the vast furnace, leaving behind but a handful of lime, the ashes of its marble flesh?

As soon as the victorious army had reconquered the capital and restored Paris to France, they hastened to the Préfecture de Police; how anxiously and filled with what dread forebodings, I need not say. The fallen and

still smoking rubbish was shovelled aside, and under the ruins was found the oaken chest — intact. It had been miraculously preserved by the bursting of a water-pipe. Our "Venus" might now bear the proud motto inscribed upon the façade of the Knight's House at Heidelberg: *Præstat invicta Venus.*

The box containing the goddess was brought back to the Louvre, and deep was the emotion when — the cover having been removed in the presence of the members of a commission appointed for the purpose of certifying to the proceedings — the "Venus" reappeared. Every one bent eagerly forward to behold her. She smiled still, softly bedded, and thus was seen under a new aspect, with the faint tender smile, the lips slightly parted as if to breathe in life, a smile luminously serene, unknown to modern lips and irresistibly charming. Her lovely body was there intact in its perfection; the long stay within the humid hiding-place had in no wise damaged the marble.

The masterpiece was safe. When, however, the goddess was raised for the purpose of being replaced on her pedestal in the centre of the sanctuary of art, in which she occupies the place of honour, the plaster restorations that mask the joints of the pieces of mar-

ble that make up the statue, and which had imbibed the moisture and become softened, broke away, —a slight accident easily repaired by means of a cast that had been made beforehand. But this incident, insignificant in itself, revealed some curious facts which may prove of interest to my readers and will be my excuse for giving a number of small but indispensable details.

The "Venus of Milo" as it stands to-day is composed of five fragments: the head and bust, the draped legs, the two hips, and the chignon. The left foot is lost, and, as well as a portion of the plinth, has been restored in plaster. The "Venus of Milo" was not, as might be believed, originally made out of a single block of marble; it was formed by the super-imposition of two blocks of corallitic marble, a highly prized stone found in Asia Minor only, the veins of which did not exceed two cubits in thickness, and which, according to Pliny, was very like ivory in the closeness and whiteness of its grain. The whole lower portion of the statue, up to the hips, where the drapery stops, as well as the plinth, was carved out of one block. A second block was used for the head and torso, to which were attached the arms, formed of separate pieces, as is proved by the tenon hole still visible near the shoulder. The arms

are not entirely lost, as many believe; fragments of them were found near the "Venus of Milo" and brought to France at the same time as the statue itself. Fruitless and unskilful attempts at restoration have caused these precious remains to be disdained or forgotten, though their authenticity is unquestionable and they might have contributed reliable data concerning the "action" of the statue. I shall return to this point presently, however.

The plaster cement that united the two blocks revealed, by its coming away, wooden trenails a few centimetres thick cut on a bevel and forcing forward the upper block, that is, the head and torso, and causing the goddess to lean slightly to one side. This was the way the statue was arranged on its arrival in Paris, in 1821, during the reign of Louis XVIII, by Bernard Lange, restorer in ordinary to the Louvre at that time; and it is under that aspect it has won the admiration of artists and the public and has become the accepted type of absolute beauty.

Before replacing the "Venus of Milo" in that attitude, which is not entirely its proper one, but which has been settled by so many casts, reductions, photographs, drawings, and engravings, that it is ineffaceably fixed in all

men's minds, the commission caused the two blocks to be placed one upon the other so that their polished surfaces should be in contact and such as they were in their primitive condition. A cast was then taken of the statue set up in the attitude it had in antiquity. This cast is placed near another, taken previously, in a room near the Assyrian museum, and as it stands out against a green drapery background, the two attitudes may be compared. The new pose makes no essential change in the appearance of the celebrated statue, though it does modify it in an appreciable manner, even to a not very observant person.

The Academy of the Fine Arts was summoned for the purpose of discussing this question, one of the most difficult and interesting that could be set to a meeting of sculptors, painters, and critics.

I was allowed to enter the Louvre, and was thus enabled to compare the old and the recent casts, after having long gazed upon the original statue, temporarily replaced in its well known attitude. In the cast in which she is seen set squarely upon the base formed by her hips, the "Venus" appears younger and more slender, but she has not the graceful abandon and voluptuous languor imparted to her by the inclined

pose. She is no longer the "adorably exhausted" Venus of which Goethe speaks; she is more of a goddess and less of a woman. The joy of triumph is visible in all her proud port, which explains the much discussed position of the arms. Raoul Rochette has suggested that she represents Venus embracing Mars, but this suggestion cannot be taken seriously; other experts have seen in her a "Victory" inscribing the name of a hero or of a battle upon a tablet or a buckler supported upon the projecting left knee. The "Winged Victory" at Brescia has an almost similar attitude, and gives countenance to a supposition which the bending forward of the statue makes likely; but the arms, though broken to pieces, still exist and fit accurately the action of the torso now it is set up straight. The "Venus of Milo" held in her left hand the apple awarded by Paris the shepherd to the most beautiful of the three goddesses who had taken him for judge, and with her right hand she was pulling up the drapery, ready to slip down, which she had cast aside for the test.

Perhaps it is the wisest course not to interfere by a change, which is logical, unquestionably, but which would worry the eye, the public's habit of admiration. But I

do wish that there should be carved in marble, from the cast I have seen, and with the most religious care, the latest version of the "Venus of Milo;" endeavouring at the same time to restore the arms, of which the pieces are there, especially the hand holding the apple. There are plenty of talented sculptors in Paris who could carry out this undertaking, which would call for much taste, delicacy, and fidelity. If I were to try to think of one man, I should come upon ten. The completed copy should then be placed not far from the original and somewhat in the background, with timid modesty, as beseems the shadow of a masterpiece. The comparison would be both instructive and interesting, for, after all, Scopas' pupil, who gave that attitude to the masterwork of antique statuary, knew at least as much as Mr. Bernard Lange, restorer to the Louvre.

Having examined the "Venus" at great length, I have come to the conclusion that she is not, as I believed at first, the ideal type of woman, but a woman, a sublime model copied with deep feeling for life, and that here the beautiful is but the splendour of truth.

XXIII

PARIS THE CAPITAL

October, 1871.

SO Paris is to be deserted and punished like a naughty child! It is seriously proposed to rob it of its capital's crown, formed of the rays of all the glories, and to reduce it to the condition of a provincial chief town. A strange notion, forsooth! To displace the central star in the heavens of France is much like trying to transpose the sun and to make the planetary system revolve around Mercury or Venus, careless of the immutable laws of gravitation. The thing cannot be done; the largest and heaviest body invariably attracts the asteroids into its orbit by a fatal and unchangeable force. If the law could be set aside for a moment, the mechanism of the universe would get out of gear and fall into nothingness.

It is as difficult to found a capital as to unmake one. It is not a mere question of will. It takes the slow co-operation of ages, a concourse of circumstances that cannot be brought about, but that have to

be submitted to climatic and geographical conditions, facilities for crystallising round a primitive nucleus, a charm that is capable of attracting and retaining, a radiance of which the beams are roads that lead back from the circumference to the centre. A capital is the drawing together of intelligence, activity, power, wealth, luxury, pleasure, accumulated in the most favourable surroundings, a hot-house in which every idea ripens quickly and is served up as an early product, a bazaar to which flow all the products of the world and which always exports more than it receives, a fire flaming night and day, and the reflection of which gives light afar, a museum ever open for the exhibition and the study of the masterpieces of art, a library in which no single book is wanting, even if it is not to be found, so that one may study the human mind in all its pages, a theatre with uninterrupted performances, a ballroom, a reception-hall lighted brilliantly from one end of the year to the other. It is the concentration, the sublimation of the country carried to its highest power, a quintessence of the national strength, of what each province has produced of most intelligent, most energetic, most perfect; for it is to it that repair all men of courage, of ambition, of genius, even at the

risk of burning themselves as moths in a candle. A capital is not an isolated being; the blood of all France flows in the veins of Paris; the phosphorus of its brain is made of the fire of all the minds it absorbs, minds that have hastened to it from the North and the South, the East and the West; for Parisians, real autochthone Parisians, are far less numerous than is believed. Its multiple soul is composed of all those souls one with its own, and represents the whole country, taken in its entirety, far better than the local departmental originalities that have a savour and an accent of their own. It welcomes the men from the provinces; polishes them up and educates them, forms them, teaches them its language, and, little by little initiating them into its secrets, makes accomplished Parisians of them, so that no one would suspect them of being natives of Carcassonne or Landerneau.

The other day there were nine of us at table, in accordance with the Greek precept, "Not fewer than the Graces, not more than the Muses," and it occurred to me to ask the guests where they were born. There was but one Parisian of Paris among them: the others were Parisians only by the quickness of their wit, the deftness of their irony, the fulness of their knowledge,

their thorough acquaintance with life, and the incontestable superiority which can be acquired only in the course of the peripatetic walks in front of the Passage de l'Opéra, when the performances at the theatres are over, and after the evening parties, on which occasions the net results of the day are summed up in a few telling words. Any one would have been taken in, even a Russian, for they were none the less thoroughbred Parisians for having been born at the most distant extremities of France, some of them on the shores of green ocean, others on the borders of the blue Mediterranean, some amid the verdant pastures of Normandy, others on the slopes of the Pyrenees. All of them had in their youth breathed in the vivifying Paris air, that sparkles like gas in which the bubbles of wit keep bursting; they had steeped themselves in the vat of ever fermenting thought; they had listened to that incessant chatter, like the chatter in an aviary, which teaches a man more than the ponderous tomes of the scientists, if it be given him to understand it, and more than all, they had had the opportunity of gauging their ownworth by comparing themselves with real scholars, with real artists, with real statesmen, so that they escaped being fools.

No matter what may be said or done, Paris is not merely the chief town of the Department of the Seine, and inhabited merely by the natives of the place. To seek to reduce it to such a condition is the most idiotic idea that can possibly come into the mind of a people still staggered by the terrible events it has just witnessed. Paris is the synthesis of France; it sums up France in itself and beams upon it. It is the eye, the heart and the brain, the light, the heat, and the thought of France. Who would behead a country and try to make the body live without the head, under the pretext that the latter was a hot head? At all events a hot head is better than none. Saint Denis alone could find his way while carrying his head in his hand, and he was a saint, though even at that he did not go very far, and the angels came to lead him on the road to Heaven.

If Paris were to die out, night would fall on the world, just as if the sun were to vanish and never to reappear. The countless stars in the firmament could not make up for the single light that alone makes day. The highest minds would be obscured; but the other nations in the universe would not permit France to suppress Paris, even if France could do it and Paris were willing. They need it too much; they know it and

they own it; the Czarewitch himself said that Paris kept the world from growing stupid. How dull people would be, did Paris cease to exist; how heavy they would become, and weary and wearisome! Its pleasantry, winged and luminous like a bee in a sunbeam, worries and stings and deflates stupidity; there is a divine brilliancy in its sparkling joy; its lightness is but hovering wisdom, and to reproach it on that account is to reproach a bird for not tramping through the streets wearing a postilion's jack-boots. But for the sarcasm of its mockery ridicule would swell out in turkey-cock fashion and bloom out wholly unconscious of its grotesque deformity. One must come to Paris as the Romans went to Athens if one desires to acquire wit, taste, grace, to learn to talk, to dress, to please. And when the approbation of that arbiter of elegance has been obtained, one may go anywhere and be sure of a welcome. In matters of art it is Paris that is the court of final appeal, and that distributes the crowns. Whoever has not been applauded in Paris, no matter whether London, Saint Petersburg, Naples, Milan, or Vienna have acclaimed him, has but a provincial reputation, and the tenors and divas of song and the ballet are well aware of the fact.

It makes one shudder to think of the extravagant bonnets, the ridiculous gowns, the vulgarly gorgeous jewellery the world would wear if Paris, transformed into a huge Carpentras, no longer set the fashions and ceased to impart its own grace to the merest bit of stuff. Why, it would make women turn ugly!

"Yes, yes," I can hear the sour, the pedantic, the serious-minded, grumble; all the owls that brilliant light dazzles and who almost make one hate common-sense; "we know all that; Paris is frivolous!" (That is the great charge!) "It lacks seriousness." Seriousness! A pretty invention of modern cant used to depreciate the amiable, facile, and clever talents that spend themselves freely; seriousness, the dull refuge of fools as they turn over their lack of ideas. But here again people are mistaken, for Paris is not as frivolous as it looks to be; it does not busy itself solely with fashions, courtesans, races, side-shows, public balls, choice suppers, drives in the Bois de Boulogne — in the days when there was a Bois de Boulogne — theatre gossip, tittle-tattle, the carriage-and-pair of such and such a yellow-haired jade; it investigates, it invents, it creates. It is, above all others, the city of thinkers and workers; of incessant, obstinate,

feverish, daily and nightly work. Nowhere does man make such demand upon his own powers, and any other would break down under the tremendous strain; but the Parisian stands it and goes on. In the wondrous city where all contrasts are to be met with, which is at one and the same time a whirl and a desert, a man may spend millions or live on a shilling a day; he may, if he will, create a Thebaïd for himself or live on the public squares. He is free to work and he is free to enjoy himself. If on some night in February, while the Carnival grows hoarse by dint of shouting "Evohe!" in front of the clusters of gaslights of the Opera, while the wheels of coupés fly over the pavement like flashing disks, while an internal conflagration of tapers makes the windows of fashionable restaurants flame, and while at the close of the performances in the theatres, crowds of spectators pour out into the streets, if you then look up you will see at the uppermost story of the darkened façade there, trembling like a tiny star behind the red stuff of the curtain, the faint light of a lamp, the companion of a student's night-watch. There, as much absorbed in his meditations as Rembrandt's "Philosopher" under his spiral staircase, a thinker, a scientist, is at work, deep in the solu-

tion of a problem on which, it may be, the future of the universe depends; a historian who makes the past live again by his magic spell; or a poet making or undoing the Gordian knot of a drama or sending up to heaven a group of starry strophes. In spite of the apparent dissipation of Paris, Stylites, in the centre of its swarming squares, ever stand on the pillar of their thought or of their dream, careless of the crowd that buzzes at their feet.

Paris, the noble city, is accused of lacking idealism, of doubting the existence of the soul, of believing in nothing, of despising virtue, and of plunging shamelessly into material enjoyments. A slander, if it be not an error. Brutality of appetite is not characteristic of Paris, for Paris is too refined, too elegant, too ingenious, too blasé even, if you will, to descend to coarse pleasures. Its gormandism asks for dainty dishes; its intoxication, for the passing intoxication of Champagne that mingles its silvery foam with the roses that crown the cup. Its vice, not very sensual at bottom, amuses itself fingering laces, ribbons, and flowers, in taking part in gallant conversations, in reeling off paradoxes of sentiment. It prefers a piquant remark to a voluptuous kiss from a pair of pretty lips.

By dint of taste it has, so to speak, spiritualised matter, has stripped it of its grossness and furnished it with wings. It is no longer palpitating meat on a stall, but an aroma, an odour, an essence that evaporates like the perfume of a scent-box. What have we eaten? Often one does not know; but what sauces, what condiments, what a way of dressing and serving dishes! Paris does not indulge in the coarse voracity of other lands; it does not plunge into materialism, for it is too much taken up with the sight of choice forms, of rich toilets, of objects of art, of a wealth of varied and brilliant things that are constantly changing. It is too artistic and too poetical.

It is probably not a paradox to affirm that in no capital city are people as sober, temperate, chaste, and moral as in Paris. No better proof of the fact is needed than the numerous army of mercenaries of pleasure, hetairæ and women of pleasure of all sorts and conditions, testifying to the virtue of the honest women whom love does not even attempt to attack, so certain is it that it would be wasting its time.

So to the pietists and mummers, to the hypocrites of philosophy and politics, to the idiots of every sect, to the would-be Juvenals, to the workers over of worn-

out commonplaces should be left the making of those stale charges in which Paris is compared to the great scarlet woman of Babylon, riding on the beast of the Apocalypse, and such other biblical amenities. That sort of thing smacks of the cad, and is bad form. The city which Henry IV already called "the great city" deserves better treatment; insults of that nature are base ingratitude. Paris, said to be so deeply gangrened by the rottenness of decadence, so enervated by luxury and debauch, so incapable of doing without its comforts, has shown itself heroic without bombast, and alone did not despair of the France that seeks to repudiate it to-day. The city supposed to be so corrupt proved its grandeur, its simplicity, its courage, its sublimity for five long months. It exhibited virtues no one expected of it; inflexible constancy, obstinate resignation, patience in bearing obscure suffering, cold, hunger, sickness, long watches in wind, snow, and rain, its feet in icy mud, at the door of bakers that sold sawdust for flour, and butchers that dealt in putrid flesh. Shut up within its tower, like Ugolino, it refused to surrender and affirmed it had dined well. Epicurean Paris put up with rat-pie and swore it had never tasted anything so good; it laughed at Prussia's Hegelian shells, al-

though they were fired at the true psychological moment, and went to sleep careless of the projectiles that, falling on its bed through a hole in the roof, might make it pass from sleep unto death. The heart of France beat in the breast of starving Paris; it was the sceptic whose faith proved the most robust, and who awaited with firm faith, and at the expense of his own life, a miracle which the provinces did not work.

But, it is urged, Paris has a bad habit of getting up riots, of smashing governments and chucking the pieces to the devil. Alas! governments that can be smashed like that are in a bad way already, and to run away from the capital is not perhaps the best way to secure safety. The Revolution, the other one, the great one, as it is called in the slang of the Café de Madrid, fetched from Versailles the baker, the baker's wife, and the baker's boy, to put a red cap on their heads first and afterwards to cut those heads off. That was not the fault of Paris. In every great city there are lions' dens, caverns closed in with thick bars in which are prisoned wild beasts, foul beasts, venomous creatures, all the refractory perversities that civilisation has failed to tame, those that love blood, those whom the conflagration delights as would fireworks, those

who look on rape as love, all the monsters of the heart, all the misshapen souls, that form a loathsome population, which the daylight knows not, and that swarms sinister in the depths of subterranean darkness. Some day it happens that a careless keeper forgets his keys in the lock of the menagerie, and the fierce brutes scatter through the terrified city with savage roars. From the open cages spring forth the hyenas of 1793, and the gorillas of the Commune. But that is not the fault of Paris.

No, what must be done is to return in triumph into Paris with flags flying, drums beating, bugles blowing, and palms in hand, in warlike yet pacific array, in proof of strength and trustfulness. Let France, riding on a golden car drawn by white coursers, be courageous enough to come to the abode of that eldest son of hers whom she loves and who is her glory : she will be welcomed by him. A son always loves the mother who trusts unreservedly to him. France without Paris is but a widow who has lost her first-born. The cry was, not so long ago, "To Berlin! to Berlin!" It would be much wiser and much more patriotic to-day to shout, "To Paris! to Paris!"

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